

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD at the University of Warwick**

**Permanent WRAP URL:**

<http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/103871/>

**Copyright and reuse:**

This thesis is made available online and is protected by original copyright.

Please scroll down to view the document itself.

Please refer to the repository record for this item for information to help you to cite it.

Our policy information is available from the repository home page.

For more information, please contact the WRAP Team at: [wrap@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:wrap@warwick.ac.uk)

**Problem People’ and ‘Problem Places’:  
Territorial Stigmatisation and ‘The Leys’,  
Oxford.**

**Richard Huggins**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy awarded by the University of Warwick.

January 2017.

### **Abstract.**

This study examines the concept of territorial stigmatisation and both the extent to which a specific community has experienced this process and the impact it has had on them. The thesis critically examines the ways in which policy, academic and other forms of representation have worked to socially construct social housing estates and those who live there as, predominantly, 'problematic'. The study also explores how officially produced data – in the form of the Indices of Multiple Deprivation and the 2011 Census also work to construct this area as one of deficit. The study employs semi-structured, qualitative interviews with a diverse sample of twenty residents of a large, peripheral housing estate in Oxford that has experienced territorial stigmatisation over a number of decades. The study presents an analysis of the rich data drawn from these interviews which examines the views and experiences of these residents and how they account for this stigmatisation, how it impacts on their lives and their community and the extent to which they present alternative and oppositional readings of where they live. The thesis demonstrates that the stigmatising narratives of the Leys are problematic because of the responsibility they seem to place on the residents for their own exclusion and deprivation. However, the thesis also demonstrates that while this estate has experienced long-term territorial stigmatisation, residents' responses to this experience are more complex, nuanced and reflective than some literature suggests.

### **Acknowledgments.**

There are many people I would like to acknowledge and thank for their contributions not only to this project but all the times I have experienced and enjoyed in the Blackbird and Greater Leys areas of Oxford over the last twenty-five years. Inevitably, I will miss some I should not miss and I apologise for any such omissions. Unfortunately, there will be others I cannot name but would want to as a way of fully acknowledging their participation and this particularly relates to all the research participants who gave of their time, knowledge and experiences during the interviews for the fieldwork. I cannot thank you enough. I also want to thank all my friends and those I have worked with in East Oxford over the years, especially John Clifford, Sasha East, John Ord and Phil Powell. I would also like to thank my supervisors in the Department of Sociology at the University of Warwick, Dr. Cath Lambert and Professor Mick Carpenter, whose support, guidance, understanding and expert knowledge was invaluable in helping me complete this work. I also wish to thank all my colleagues at Oxford Brookes University who also supported my endeavours while completing this thesis, especially Professor Derek Elsom, Jane Iliffe, Dr. Chris McDonagh, Dr. Abbey Halcli, Professor Anne-Marie Kilday and John Kelly. I want to also thank my family, our children, Rosie, William, Owen and Tom and, of course, my partner Sara, for all her support and understanding particularly during the most difficult of times since March 2013.

Lastly, our beloved son, Connor, who died in July 2013 and shall be forever missed – this work is dedicated to him, his memory and, most of all, his deeply held sense of justice.

**For Connor and all the YDs – everywhere!**

## **Table of Contents.**

<b>Foreword: Some Notes From the Field.</b>	<b>Page 9</b>
<b>1. ‘Problem People’ and ‘Problem Places’: Territorial Stigmatisation and ‘The Ley’s.’</b>	<b>Page 11</b>
1.1 Introduction.	Page 11
1.2 Historical Contexts.	Page 15
1.3 Sociological Contexts.	Page 17
1.4 Cultural Contexts.	Page 20
1.5 Political Contexts.	Page 22
<b>2. Locating the Study.</b>	<b>Page 29</b>
2.1 Council Estates: The Symbolic Significance of Mass Social Housing.	Page 29
2.2 Terroritorial Stigmatisation and the Continuum of Urban Despair.	Page 34
2.3 Wacquant and ‘Terroritorial Stigmatisation’.	Page 41
2.4 Studies of ‘Problem Estates’.	Page 47
2.5 Conclusion.	Page 69
<b>3. Discourses About the ‘Poor’: Conceptions of the ‘Underclass’.</b>	<b>Page 71</b>
3.1 Introduction.	Page 71
3.2 Reading Policy Discourses.	Page 74
3.3 The ‘Deserving’ and the ‘Underserving’ Poor.	Page 76
3.4 The ‘Underclass’.	Page 78
3.5 New Labour’s Narratives of Community and	Page 80

	Social Exclusion.	
3.6	New Labour, New Community?	Page 44
3.7	Bringing Britain Together: New Labour's Narrative of the 'Problems'.	Page 93
3.8	Taking Stock: New Labour's Policy Approach 1997-2010	Page 96
3.9	'Broken Britain' and the 'Big Society': The Coalition Government 2010-2015 and Beyond.	Page 100
3.8	Conclusion.	Page 102
<b>4.</b>	<b>Method.</b>	Page 106
4.1	Introduction.	Page 106
4.2	Constructivism, Interactionism and Qualitative Research.	Page 107
4.3	Locating the Study: Context and Choice of Fieldwork Site.	Page 110
4.4	The Choice and Use of Interviews in Qualitative Research.	Page 115
4.5	Appraising Qualitative Research.	Page 118
4.6	Sampling and Recruitment.	Page 120
4.7	The Interviews.	Page 123
4.8	Data Analysis.	Page 124
4.9	Ethical Considerations.	Page 125
4.10	Conclusion.	Page 126
<b>5.</b>	<b>Mapping the City: Social and Economic Context.</b>	Page 127
5.1	Introduction.	Page 127
5.2	The Leys and Its Reputation.	Page 131
5.3	Hotting, the Leys and National Media Coverage.	Page 134
5.4	Oxford: General Overview.	Page 140
5.5	Profiling the Leys: 2011 Census Data.	Page 142

5.5.1.	Population and Age Structure.	Page 145
5.5.2.	Ethnicity.	Page 145
5.5.3.	Housing Type and Tenure.	Page 146
5.5.4.	Qualifications.	Page 146
5.5.5.	Economic Activity.	Page 146
5.5.6.	Working Age Benefits.	Page 147
5.6	Conclusion.	Page 147
<b>6.</b>	<b>‘It’s Like a Story of Hope in a Damned Environment’.</b>	Page 148
6.1	Introduction.	Page 148
6.2	The Leys: Reflections on the General Reputation.	Page 151
6.3	Media Representations.	Page 157
6.4	On “Hotting”: The Estate and National Media Coverage.	Page 159
6.5	Negative Representations of the Estate and their Impact on Residents.	Page 165
6.6	Attitudes of ‘outsiders and visitors’.	Page 172
6.7	Official Responses.	Page 175
6.8	Drugs and Drug Dealing.	Page 178
6.9	Conclusion.	Page 180
<b>7.</b>	<b>‘So I Like Blackbird Leys’.</b>	Page 184
7.1	Introduction.	Page 184
7.2	Participant’s Descriptions of the Estate.	Page 185
7.3	A Sense of Community.	Page 188
7.4	Formal Community Resources and Networks.	Page 196
7.4.1.	General	Page 197
7.4.2	Primary Schools	Page 201

7.4.3	Community Centres.	Page 202
7.4.4.	Leisure Activities.	Page 205
7.5.	‘It’s the People’.	Page 208
7.6	Informal Networks, Self-Help and Community Support.	Page 211
7.7	‘Newcomers’, Transient Populations and Community Stability.	Page 218
7.8	Conclusion.	Page 221
<b>8.</b>	<b>Boredom, Depression and the ‘Poverty of Opportunity’.</b>	Page 224
8.1	Introduction.	Page 224
8.2	Employment, Unemployment and Income Deprivation.	Page 225
8.3	Shops and Shopping.	Page 227
8.4	Pubs and Clubs.	Page 233
8.5	On Accessing Services.	Page 237
8.6	Everyday Struggles.	Page 243
8.7	Fragility and Vulnerability: ‘It’s Like Being Robbed.’	Page 246
8.8	“Poverty of Opportunity”, Isolation, Boredom and Depression.	Page 253
8.10	Conclusion.	Page 255
<b>9.</b>	<b>Conclusion.</b>	Page 258
9.1	Introduction	Page 258
9.2	To what extent do people who live in an area of large social housing provision experience ‘territorial stigmatisation’?	Page 261
9.3	How do people narrate their experiences of territorial stigmatisation and how do they account for the impact on their day-to-day lives?	Page 263



9.4	Is it possible to identify counter narratives and discourses that present alternative readings of the experiences of living in a territorially stigmatised area?	Page 264
9.5	Relevance of this Study to Current Policy and Scholarly Debates	Page 266
9.6	Reflections on My Study and Future Research.	Page 270
<b>10.</b>	<b>References.</b>	Page 273
	<b>Appendix One - Participant Information Sheet.</b>	Page 304
	<b>Appendix Two - Interview Topic Guide.</b>	Page 305
	<b>List of Tables.</b>	
	Table 1 – Sample Profile.	Page 122
	Table 2 – Towns by Population in Oxfordshire.	Page 144

**Some notes from the field - Oxford Blackbirds FC vs Henley Boys FC, *Oxford Mail* Under 15 Football League, October 2011.**

Last Sunday I attended an Oxford Mail Under 15 football league game in the early October sunshine on the Blackbird Leys sports ground just off the Pegasus Road. The local team – Oxford Blackbirds – were playing against a team from South Oxfordshire accompanied by a small cluster of supporters in the form of parents and siblings. The sense of trepidation at being ‘on the Leys’ is palpable – despite the warm welcome. Throughout the game comments are made about the nearby ‘high-rise’ blocks, the general urban landscape and the general state of the area. Numerous indistinct references are made to the area’s ‘reputation’ – without anyone clearly stating what this is or how they know this reputation is deserved or accurate. Over time two or three stories are re-told about comments made about Blackbird Leys the night before, by friends and family members about those who were planning to make the upcoming trip to the estate, and none of them are positive or even neutral.

As the game proceeds a growing number of comments are made which are designed to both illustrate the ‘dangers’ of the estate and to ‘lighten’ the mood. One person asks another “Is my car still in the car park?” The answer “yes, but the wheels are gone.” Another observes, “Aren’t they (the Blackbird Leys team) quick?” to which some replies “Yes, it’s all the practice they get running from the Old Bill.”

In many ways all this *could* be reduced to or explained as ‘normal’ or commonplace rivalry between local areas - be that City and small local town, between one area relatively close to another - the sort of thing that is not unusual, one might say. But it isn’t. In the more subtle and pervasive comments – and not just the comments but the underlying attitudes and reactions to the home team and its players – that are more revealing and problematic.

There is the constant suggestion that the home sides are ‘tasty’, ‘up for it’ as they are overly physical, committing disproportionate numbers of fouls and generally ‘rough’. This simply does not fit with what I see as I watch the game. In fact, what I do see is the visiting players constantly challenging the officials and questioning their judgement and little else. Furthermore, there is a persistent expression of surprise amongst the travelling spectators when any of the home players display any signs of friendship, sporting behaviour or camaraderie whether to their own players or those of the visiting team.

During one break in play to facilitate treatment to an injured player a number of visiting team players either take water bottles from the touchline or ask for them thrown to them by members of the coaching team. One throw falls short and a home player picks up the stray water bottle and passes it to the visiting team member to which the bottle was originally thrown. A common and certainly not unusual action on a sports field but one that occasions – in this specific location – an outpouring of surprise and statements such as “But that was nice” from the visiting supporters. It is almost as if such behaviour up to that moment was considered beyond the capacities or will of the Oxford Blackbirds’ players.

The game finishes with a home win and handshakes all round.

## **Chapter One: ‘Problem Places’ and ‘Problem People’: Territorial Stigmatisation and the ‘Leys’.**

### **1.1 Introduction.**

This thesis is a study of territorial stigmatisation, the processes through which residential areas are stigmatised and ‘othered’ for where they are, how they look and who lives there. The study examines how areas become stigmatised in this way and how this phenomenon impacts on the everyday lives and experiences of individuals who live in territorially stigmatised areas. In this case a large social housing estate located on the periphery of the City of Oxford: Blackbird Leys and Greater Leys or ‘The Leys’ as it is now known locally and how it will be referred to throughout this study. The area is home to 13,500 residents and would be the eighth most populous town in Oxfordshire if it was a separate development instead of a peripheral housing estate on the edge of the city. This area has experienced a long history of territorial stigmatisation, poor reputation and negative associations in Oxford, the wider region, nationally and even internationally on occasion.

The thesis draws on twenty in-depth interviews with residents conducted between 2010 and 2011 as well as additional ethnographic material gathered during twenty five years of experience of working on and around the Leys in a variety of capacities: as a social researcher, as a director and trustee of two drugs intervention providers, a founding director of a community development initiative and as a member of various bodies, boards and advisory groups that have worked on regeneration and community development plans for the estate.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> See for example, Steering Group Member – Blackbird Leys Communities Against Drugs Project (CAD), Home Office funded community development initiative, April 2002-2005, Partnership Board Member, Leys Linx, SRB-5, Oxford, 2002 – 2004, current member of the Oxford Strategic Partnership Sub Group on Health and Social Inclusion, Founding Trustee and Director, Community, Action, Development Ltd., Trustee and Director Substance Misuse Arrest Referral Team, (SMART CJS), Oxford, Trustee (Chair) and Director, Oxfordshire User Team, (OUT), Steering Group Member - Health Provision for Ethnic Minorities funded by the NHS and organised by the Oxfordshire Bangladeshi Association in partnership with East Oxford Action, 2003-2005, Steering Group Member – Blackbird Leys Communities Against Drugs Project (CAD), Home Office

The core concerns of the thesis are shaped by three main research questions and these are:

- 1). To what extent do people who live in an area of large social housing provision experience ‘territorial stigmatisation’?
- 2). How do people narrate their experiences of territorial stigmatisation and how do they account for the impact on their day-to-day lives?
- 3). Is it possible to identify counter narratives and discourses that present alternative readings of the experiences of living in a territorially stigmatised area?

The body of the thesis is organised into eight main chapters which I will outline here. Chapter Two presents a critical literature review of what might be termed ‘problem places’, mainly residential areas which are or once were ‘council estates’. This chapter also reviews the concept of territorial stigmatisation and its antecedents and provides a more in-depth review of some key examples of studies of large social housing estates as context both for the design and construction of my research. Chapter Three builds on this analysis by presenting a critical analysis of the ways in which certain language and definitional terms have been employed to describe and discuss the ‘problem people’. This chapter also includes a review of the relationship between such discursive representations and the policy prescriptions advanced by the New Labour governments during the period 1997 - 2010 that directly related to policy areas that can be seen to be directly focused on engaging with ‘problem people’ and ‘problem places’. In Chapter Four I discuss the methods employed in this research project and why these were selected as appropriate for my study. This chapter also includes a discussion of my location as a researcher (in relation to my participants and the selection of the fieldwork site) as well as exploring the ethical considerations of the study. Chapter Five provided a brief geographic and demographic description of the Leys in order to provide

---

funded community development initiative, April 2002-2005, Steering Group member, Regeneration Framework Oxford City, 2009-present.

further context for the presentation of the primary data analysis. Chapters Six, Seven and Eight provide detailed reporting, analysis and discussion of the data derived from the fieldwork interviews undertaken on the estate over an eighteen month period between 2010 and 2011. The final chapter offers a concluding summary of the research which includes highlighting and discussing the most significant findings of the research along with the implications for further research and policy processes.

There are a number of reasons for approaching the research in this way. First, I want to establish the significance and role that discourse and narratives play in the conceptualisation, description and attitudes towards what are seen as deprived areas and neighbourhoods and those who live there. Indeed, the role of narratives both official and individual is central to the arguments made throughout the thesis (Kohler Riessman, 2008; Andrews, et.al, 2013). I am particularly interested in the ways in which some sections of society are seen and then 'named' as 'problem people' who live in 'problem places' (Atkinson, 1999, 2000; Atkinson and Helms, 2007; Atkinson and Jacobs, 2010; Boland, 2008; Dean and Hastings, 2000, 2003; Fraser, 1996; Hastings and Dean, 2003; Johnstone and Macleod, 2007; Johnstone and Mooney, 2007). Second, it is equally important to recognise that the development of the conceptual language used to identify and define the 'poor' has a long history which accompanies the rise of the industrial society and mass urban social housing and the socio-economic and political shifts that have subsequently impacted on that industrial society in the late twentieth century. Importantly, this is not a singular or static discourse but rather a variable, multiplicity of discourses that, whilst characterised by certain continuities, changes (often in quite subtle ways) over time as it reflects the different socio-economic conditions and anxieties amongst those who govern and hold significant social, economic and cultural power (Damer, 1989; Dean, 1992; Atkinson, 2000; Skeggs, 2004; Atkinson and Jacobs, 2010; Matthews, 2010). Third, these linguistic conceptualisations,

narratives and constructions of the 'poor', along with the problems they are perceived to present to authority, can be seen to have tangible and significant impacts on the lives of those who are so defined and constructed (Dean, 1992; Charlesworth, 2000; Atkinson and Kintrea, 2001; Bauder, 2002; Brattbakk and Hansen, 2004; Smith, et. al., 2007; Boland, 2008; Atkinson and Jacobs, 2010; Bond, 2011; Featherstone, 2013). For Skeggs, these processes come together over time to create particular understandings of and constraints on the working-class. She states:

The representations we have of the working-class have, for a long time, enabled them to be fixed, catergorised, classified, pathologised, projected onto and used as boundary markers. This is achieved across a powerful conglomeration of symbolic systems, government rhetoric, institutionalised practices, popular and academic representations. (2004: 181)

In other words, the use of this conceptual language matters as does how it is deployed, refined and enacted through policy, political action and social and economic interventions in the lives of those who are targeted by this discourse and those interventions. Finally, this focus on the persistence of language establishes, for me anyway, the critical need to hear more from those who are targeted (implicitly and explicitly) by such language, policy and interventions to hear what they have to say about their own lives and experiences, how they narrate their own spaces, to see how their voice compares with the definitions, conceptualisations and constructions of their lives and where they live held by policy-makers, social commentators and academic researchers.

As stated, commentaries and representations of the 'poor' have a long and extensive history and I think these can be usefully outlined as a set of overlapping contexts for my work

conceptualized here as: historical, sociological, cultural and political. In this introduction I want to briefly touch on a few seminal examples of how this long-standing fascination with the cultures, behaviours, intentions and desires of those at the lower end of the socio-economic hierarchy (Damer, 1989, Bourke, 1994; Bonnett, 1998; Welshman, 1999; 2006b; Shresgren 2002, Dean and Hastings, 2003, Skeggs, 2004, Boland, 2008, Devereux, et al, 2011) - in other words the 'poor'- has been framed by early commentaries and social research. We can, therefore, identify an extensive historical representation of the perceived flaws and fecklessness of the 'urban other' (Taylor, et al., 1996), that can be seen to act as a set of recurrent foundational premises for policy and policy actors as well in the approaches social researchers as well as more popular conceptions of the urban poor. These perceptions of the 'problematic poor' can be found across a wide range of commentaries, fictional accounts and government reports that accompanied the rise of industrial urban landscapes and, in particular the emergence of concentrations of mass social housing for what once might have been called, simply, the 'working classes' (Damer, 1989).

## **1.2 Historical Contexts.**

The emergence of deep and concentrated poverty in particularly the large industrial cities of Northern England and London prompted a detailed range of commentaries from a broad range of actors. As the urban poor became more numerous and concentrated and the conditions they lived in became more visible so the availability of commentaries, studies and depictions multiplied. A number of late-Victorian and early-Edwardian writers completed various fictional and semi-fictional treatments of the industrial city, the urban slums within them and the lives of those who lived there. Ranging from forms of realist narratives and drawing on elements of personal observation to more biographical or documentary commentaries these texts accompanied the emergence of early research studies focusing on the urban poor and the environments they lived in (see, for example, Mayhew, (2012),



[1862], Morrison, (1997), [1894], (2009), [1896], Roberts, (1971). These texts, while offering a valuable but particular form of primary sources have also left a set of representational legacies of the urban poor, place and chronic deprivation that can be seen as acting as a key element in the framing of the idea of the urban poor and can be seen to still echo in some of the discussions conducted in contemporary commentaries.

For example, Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and London Poor*, originally published in 1862, offered a detailed and comprehensive cataloguing of and insight into the lives of the Victorian poor through the words of London's street traders, entertainers, criminal offenders and beggars, delivered through a potent mixture of journalism and social investigation. Likewise, Arthur Morrison's *Tales of Means Streets* (1894) and *A Child of the Jago* (1896) provide powerful and vivid examples of such work and what we might call the 'urban condition' at the turn of the twentieth century. In similar ways, the American author Jack London visited the city he shared his name with, in 1902 to, as he put it, go down into the under-world of London 'with an attitude of mind which I can best liken to that of the explorer' to examine the living and working conditions of the London poor (1905:4). Robert Robert's semi-autobiographical work *The Classic Slum: Salford Life in the First Quarter of the Century* (1971), aimed to provide a detailed study of the life of the urban poor in Edwardian Britain and, continuing the narratives found in Morrison and London, noted the cumulative impact of poverty, slum housing, hunger and insecurity in creating an urban populace characterized by ignorance and degradation.

At the same time as these writers began to document inner urban life we can also observe the emergence of a series of more empirical surveys of the conditions of the working class were undertaken by individuals such as Charles Booth's *Life and Labour of the People in London* conducted between 1886 and 1903. In addition, these surveys were also accompanied by the growth of state sponsored inquiries into the condition of the 'poor', for

example, *The Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress 1905-9*. These reports and other accounts often present the contemporary social commentator as entering the poor and run-down areas of the city as a kind of explorer akin to those who had ventured beyond the shores of Britain and there is often a similar missionary zeal also detectable in these works. This helps foster the vision of the city as an alien and dangerous place (Pile et al., 1999) and one in which the issue of social order and disorder are central. For Batean, (2002, 2004) this type of approach is at least implicit in much contemporary research and analysis of urban poverty and he argues that the ‘imperial’ and colonial approach to the ‘other’ emerges readily in much contemporary analysis and theory. As Pile et al (1999) remind us the researcher, social commentator, Royal Commissioner, committed social reformer etc., all enter the field from a privileged position of some form, with a particular way of seeing. Whether this is political, social, methodological or a combination of all three there always exists an unequal set of power relations between the commentator and those commented on. This is a key consideration which I will return to in Chapter Four.

### **1.3 Sociological Contexts.**

These ‘problem spaces’ have also provided a focus for the foundation of the social sciences and urban studies from the start of the analysis of the industrial society (see for example, Engels, 1993 [1844]) and have remained a constant theme throughout the development of these disciplines. The Chicago School (For example, Park and Burgess, 1967, [1925]; Wirth, 1938, 1942; Shaw and McKay, 1942) demonstrated both the social sciences’ fascination with the urban poor and the opportunities they saw as provided by the urban environment as a kind of sociological laboratory in which to study human behaviour. Louis Wirth’s work on ‘urbanism as a way of life’ (1938) and his identification of ‘zones of social disorganisation’ would help instill the notion that the sociological study of the urban poor should approach these populations and their spatial organisation as inherently

problematic and exceptional. In similar ways, Foucault (1970) argues that areas such as these could be seen as ‘deviation heterotopias’ or counter spaces of total ‘otherness’ that societies have always created and that serve a number of functions in terms of social stratification and control. Wacquant (2007, 2008a, 2008b, 2010), perhaps the most thorough theorist of territorial stigmatisation to date, draws on this analysis in developing his arguments about the nature and experience of the most excluded members of society or, as he calls them, ‘urban outcasts’.

Damer also notes how long standing the notion of the ‘problem’ estate with its ‘problem’ people is, tracing the origins of this approach to a 1930 government report, and states that it has remained a major focus of both ‘mystificatory media attention, and uncritical sociological research’ ever since (1989: viii). What has certainly characterised many political and popular conceptions of ‘problem urban areas’ has been the increased attention to the characteristics, behaviours and attitudes of those who live in these areas. Damer (1989) usefully summarises the process as one of ‘filtering-down representation’ which he argues is consistently reproduced ‘more or less tenuously’ in official literature with the only difference lying in the ‘degree of camouflage of offensive language’ that is employed in this literature (18). For Damer the story goes like this:

...the first tenants of such estates came from terrible housing conditions, they were very poor, were from large families, were short on domestic skills, were unused to a ‘proper’ house, did not respect authority or property, were accustomed to a wildly extrovert and irresponsible way of life, were enmeshed in a drunken and criminal subculture, and so on. The worst of the tenants constituted a core of ‘problem families’ or ‘anti-social’ tenants whose behaviour eventually drove the substantial numbers of ‘respectable’ families in these estates to emigrate. Thus the estates began to acquire a bad reputation

among the potential tenants of local authorities, and consequently ‘respectable’ families would refuse to accept a tenancy in them. With this twist in the spiral of the bad reputation, the estates came to be used by local authorities as ‘dumping grounds’ for thoroughly ‘unsatisfactory’ tenants or ‘problem’ cases deemed unworthy of better accommodation. As the number of ‘unsuitable’ and ‘unsatisfactory’ families and individuals increased in any one scheme, so vandalism also increased, local authority services began to be provided with less than enthusiasm and the estate came to assume the characteristics of a ‘ghetto’. This resulted in the flight of any ‘respectables’ left in the neighbourhood, the total impossibility of letting houses there and the final, unequivocal status of the estate as a ‘problem’, which again in turn finally ensured its more-or-less abandonment by the local authority and its rapid decline to a state of total dereliction. (1989:19).

For Damer, despite an absence of research studies that substantiate this narrative and the presence of a number that directly challenge its very premise, such representations readily mapped directly on to the general characteristics of Thatcherite moral authoritarianism and by the late 1980s had become ‘inextricably mixed up with environmental determinism’ (19). Damer (1989) sees this to be particularly true of the Manchester areas of Hulme and the adjacent development of the Moss Side District Centre (See also Fraser, 1996, Taylor, 1996 for further discussion regarding Moss Side’s reputation). In this example, he argues, it is the design of these developments which is crucially responsible for their resemblance to a ghetto although these design faults have also been accompanied by the process of ‘filtering-down representation’ as well. He holds the work of Jacobs (1969) and Newman (1973) and Coleman (1985) particularly culpable in relation to

the dissemination of these ideas but I suspect would willingly have added Power (1999) to this list if he had been writing at a later point.

#### **1.4 Cultural Contexts.**

Over many years the council estate has formed the fictional location for narratives of despair, poverty, drug use and criminality. From the spectacularly exploited landscape of the Edinburgh periphery estates in Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* (1992) to Andrea Dunbar's more humorous but, at times, equally bleak play *Rita, Sue and Bob Too* (1982) and Andrea Arnold's *Wasp*<sup>2</sup> (2003), the marginal spaces of the public housing estate are readily identified as places of economic deprivation, personal and domestic conflict and social disorganisation associated, at best, with moral and behavioural agnosticism if not all out societal breakdown.

We can also find a variation of this theme in autobiographical reports (often from those who have 'made good' of themselves and moved out physically and in social status) that often play, albeit more ambiguously and often with more in-built affectation, on similar images and narratives about the housing estates they grew up on. Others, working within this tradition, focus on the fragmentation of the national project under conditions of post-industrial economic restructuring. Seabrook's short autobiographical account of his childhood and family life in Northampton (and his subsequent success in obtaining a place to study at Oxford), *An English Exile*, (1996), explores not only his experiences of growing up there but themes and contradictions of the housing estate as a both a major success of socially progressive housing policies born from the tradition of social and welfare democracy to the apparent failure of such locations in the years of de-industrialisation and economic re-organisation of the 1970s and 1980s.

---

<sup>2</sup> This short film, which depicts a 'day-in-the-life' of Zoe a 23 year-old women with four children who lives on

I was drawn to the people whose skills, evolved in response to what had given the towns and cities their function, were now being extinguished...As the manufacturing districts vanished, shrines full of exotic merchandise were erected at their heart; the shopping centres, galleries and piazzas were consolations offered for our own obliterated function and ruined sense of purpose. (Seabrook, 1996: 180-6).

These issues of depiction and narration of ‘council estates’ can also be explored through the photography of for example, major photographic projects such as *Survival Strategies for Britain’s Inner Cities* (1982) and more subtle works such as *No Such Thing as Society* (2007) which offer an array of images and reflections on the character of urban existence in the 1970s onwards. These works are powerful, questioning and present images in ways that are both challenging and reflective of broader social, economic and political issues. But not all photographic studies take this traditional photo-documentary approach. For example, the work of Tom Hunter, which I would call ‘fictional documentary’ is less focused on establishing any form of engaged reflection or social commentary and much more focused on representing key elements from the narratives of ‘misery’ that are supposed to both characterize and define life on housing estates. Thus Hunter’s 2005 collection *Living in Hell and Other Stories* consists of a series of staged compositions that portray to the viewer the everyday ‘misery’ of life in certain communities. In particular, pictures such as *Living in Hell* and *Hallowe’en Horror: Trick or Treat Thugs Break Mum’s Bones* work to reinforce casual and pernicious stereotypes of life on Britain’s housing estates.

Of course, these representations of ‘the’ council estate do draw on some form of social ‘reality’ or, rather, are often composite forms of multiple ‘realities’. Hanley’s *Estates* (2007) portrait of her own experiences of growing up and living on a council estate provides an intimate and moving description of what being from a council estate can *mean* to those

who grow up there and those who do not. Hanley's account provides a detailed example of the complex meanings of the council estate moving from critical social commentary on the nature, role and meaning of the estate to passionate and moving discussions of the positive aspects of those who live there. The book navigates the difficulty territory of the close proximity of 'negative' and 'positive' aspects of the council estate; those constructed both internally and externally. However, all too often commentaries focus on narrating and making visible only the negative aspects of living in social housing areas.

### **1.5 Political Contexts.**

As Dean and Hastings note a key part of the reputation of an area or neighbourhood '... lies with how the people who lived there are perceived' (1997: 9) and a number of observers have noted how problem areas are often deemed to be populated by 'problem people', (usually in vague or ill-defined ways) without specific evidence to substantiate this claim (Damer, 1989; Hastings, 2004; Warr, 2005; Garret, 2007; Mee, 2007; MacDonald, et.al., 2014). Blokland (2008) notes how such people are deemed to possess certain key, defining characteristics and traits such as passivity, dependency and, as residents and citizens are disengaged. Other commentators have developed this analysis further to suggest forms of categorisation that are more marked, more totalizing and more politically targeted. For Wray (2006) people become categorized and sorted by means of the application of 'stigmatypes', for Tyler they have become 'revolting subjects', a collection of 'figurative scapegoats' which fulfill the role of 'national abject' (2013: 9) . In other ways these categorisations present us with contemporary versions of Cohen's (1972) 'folk devils' and work to alert us to the unchallenged legitimacy of the 'mainstream' (Skeggs, 2004). Damer refers to this phenomenon when he report on Moss Side, Manchester:

It is alleged that it is the lack of 'defensive space' on the deck-access walkways which causes the problem. This, in the orthodoxy leads housewives to become Valium junkies and prostitutes, toddlers to hurl themselves from the balconies, and teenage boys to turn to generalized mugging and raping (19).

Seabrook's (1996) autobiographical account of his experiences provides us with a list of such stigmatypes which emerged through an extensive and negative process of 'renaming' of humanity which accompanied the economic restructuring of the 1980s:

At the same time, the streets where we lived were no longer full of neighbours, relatives, workmates, friends, but thugs, vandals, rapists, weirdoes, alkie, druggies, nutcases, fiends, molesters, abusers, beasts, crooks, no-hopers, winos, thieves, muggers, slags and bastards. The people we had called Auntie or Uncle were transformed, little by little, into strangers, and malevolent strangers at that.

(Seabrook, 1996: 186).

Seabrook links this 'extensive renaming' to the emergence of the ideological commitment to neo-liberal economics and hyper-consumerism that forcibly prises apart networks of human relationships and undermines what he calls the 'consolations of friendship and kindred' (1996: 186). We do not necessarily have to endorse his reading of the 1980s to recognize the connections between the market economics of the Thatcher years and the political economy of social and economic decline experienced in those areas of traditional industry and manufacturing throughout the United Kingdom. For Bauman (1998), the replacement of work by consumer activity as the mechanism linking individual motives, social integration and systemic reproduction, which finds echoes in Seabrook's observations,



has particular implications for areas of large, peripheral social housing where there is minimal resource and minimal opportunity to participate in the consumer world of the high street or shopping mall.

The examination of this renaming, which represents an extension rather than an introduction of the badging of the poor (Hindle, 2004), reveals not only the periodic re-stratification of the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor but also the periodic re-emergence of particular (and negative) ideas and concepts. One such historically rooted example of this phenomenon is the notion of the 'problem family' which enjoys the recurrent attention of policy makers and professional practitioners and is currently doing so now through the Government's Troubled Families Programme (DCLG, 2012). However, as Welshman has shown (1999; 2006) the notion of the 'problem family' has a very long history and is a concept that makes periodic returns to policy as a central explanation for certain social problems, currently including: low school attainment, anti-social behavior, crime, unemployment and drug and alcohol dependency. Furthermore, others have shown how frequently this discourse is gendered through a focus on the 'feckless' and failing mother (Starkey, 2000; Vincent, et al., 2008). Of course, families may well exist that cause disproportionate amounts of difficulty to the authorities or feature more regularly in the case work of social workers and housing officers than others. But it should remind us, again, that such specific cases are not useful in providing definitional attributes to larger populations and that such conceptions are often theorized and imagined to a level of generality that makes them invalid as an appropriate form of social analysis.

This can be further explored with the following example of how 'problem families' were constructed in the 1940s. In 1944 the then Acting Deputy Medical Officer of Health in Rotterdam, R.C. Wofinden, provided a clear statement of the nature of 'problem families' in an address to a conference about this phenomenon in Manchester. Noting the 'newly

awakened interest in social medicine' Wofinden highlights that interest had, once again, focused on what Booth referred to as the 'submerged tenth' and maintained that within this group are to be found the problem families<sup>3</sup>, families who, for one reason or another, '...have not kept pace with social progress and are a brake on the wheels (1946:127). Wofinden offers his own definition of problem families as 'families with social defectiveness of such a degree that they require care, supervision and control for their own well-being and for the well-being of others' but he also notes that generally definitions of what constituted a 'problem family' were vague and open to misinterpretation (1946: 128). But, importantly, he maintains that the absence of a definition does not matter as he has always found that there is little doubt in the minds of health and social welfare workers what the characteristics of these families are and, in the absence of an agreed definition, reliance can be placed on description of these characteristics. To that end Wofinden states that he cannot improve on the description he originally gave in 1944 which was:

Often it is a large family, some of the children being dull or feeble minded. From their appearance they are strangers to soap and water, toothbrush and comb; the clothing is dirty and torn and the footgear absent or totally inadequate. Often they are verminous and have scabies and impetigo. Their nutrition is surprisingly average – doubtless due to extra-familial feeding in schools. The mother is frequently substandard mentally. The home, if indeed it can be described as such, has usually the most striking characteristics. Nauseating odours assail one's nostrils on entry, and the source is usually located in some urine-sodden, faecal-stained mattress in an upstairs room. There are no floor coverings, no decorations on the walls except perhaps the scribblings of the children and bizarre patterns formed by the absent plaster. Furniture is of the

---

<sup>3</sup> Wofinden notes that these families 'masquerade under a variety of names – problem families, social problem families, derelict families, handicapped families and unsatisfactory families'. (1946: 127).

most primitive, cooking utensils absent, facilities for sleeping hopeless – iron bedsteads furnished with soiled mattresses and no coverings. Upstairs there is flock everywhere which the mother assures us has come out of a mattress which she has unpacked for cleansing. But the flock seems to stay there for weeks and the cleansed and repacked mattress never appears. The bathroom is the least frequented room of the building. There are sometime faecal accumulations on the floors upstairs, and tin baths containing several days' accumulations of faeces and urine are not unknown. The children, especially the older ones, often seem perfectly happy and contented, despite such a shocking environment. They will give a description of how a full sized midday meal has been cooked and eaten in the house on the day of the visit when the absence of cooking utensils gives the lie to their assertions....One can only conclude that such children have never known restful sleep, that the amount of housework done by the mother is negligible, and that the general standard of hygiene is lower than that of the animal world.

Wofinden, (1946:128-9).

Wofinden and his team estimated that there were 243 such families containing 900 children under the age of 14 out of population of 76,000 in Rotherham on 1944. In terms of causes Wofinden and other colleagues in different parts of the country whilst recognizing that there are multiple contributory factors at work also argue that a significant cause of this problem is the incidence of 'certified or suspected feeble-mindedness' with around 20% of the mothers of problem families in Rotherham falling into this category. His solution is simply – stop such women from reproducing.

That mentally-defective women should be allowed to bear and attempt to rear children is a negation of social progress. The solution is self-evident: more efficient ascertainment of mental deficiency, the provision of more special schools for educationally subnormal children and of more institutions and training centres. (1946:128).

In observing that Lewis's 1929 estimate of there being 105,000 feeble-minded children in England and Wales between the ages of seven and sixteen was still a relevant estimate in 1946, Wofinden concludes that, without intervention, these were the 'potential parents of our future problem families'.

In conclusion I would suggest that the most urgent necessities are for the further scientific study of these families, the better ascertainment and disposal of mental deficiency cases, and the setting up of experimental training centres where parents can be trained in the proper management of a home and the upbringing of children. (Wofinden, 1946: 132).

Whilst Wofinden's language of 'feeble-mindedness' and his open support for eugenicist solutions would be found objectionable now the notion of the existence intergenerational 'problem families' and the general pathologising of a whole section of a population is not out of step with much contemporary analysis and interpretation, for example Louise Casey's 2012 report for the Department for Communities and Local Government entitled *Listening to Troubled Families* (Casey, 2012) and the Coalition Government's *Troubled Families Programme* which sought to 'turn around' 120,000 families by May 2015 (DCLG, 2012:1) .

In this introduction I have outlined some of the contexts into which more recent research and studies of areas of concentrated low-income populations can be located. I have aimed to demonstrate both the importance of and centrality of the notion of ‘problem places and problem populations’ to the social sciences and the ways in which this key focus has led to the general framing of perceptions and explanations in particular ways. In the next chapter I develop this argument further with a direct focus on one of the most potent of cultural and symbolic markers of deprivation, poverty and social exclusion in twentieth-century Britain: the ‘Council Estate’.

## **Chapter Two: Locating the Study.**

### **2.1. Council Estates: The Symbolic significance of Mass Social Housing.**

What began as a nineteenth-century crusade to house the urban poor in clean and comfortable surroundings eventually turned into just another industry, co-opted by large building firms who received state subsidies to build quickly and carelessly, and encouraged by the short-term thinking of governments whose votes relied on quick solutions to visible problems. (Hanley, 2007: 50-51).

Neighbourhoods constructed between the 1950s and 1970s are more likely to have a poor reputation than pre-war neighbourhoods.

(Permentier, et al., 2008: 837).

Of course ‘problem people’ have to live somewhere and in the minds of many the spaces they inhabit are (or at least once were) ‘council estates’. ‘Council estates’, or large and concentrated areas of social housing, as I touched on in the introduction, have attached to them a particular set of social, economic, political and cultural meanings in the United Kingdom which provide an important context for my research. The ways in which such locations have been reported, not only in academic, policy literature and news media but also in literature, film, television and photography reflect not only the socio-economic and political significance of the ‘council estate’ (and by definition those who live there) but also their cultural and symbolic significance. In many ways the significance of the ‘council estate’ reflects a social and political paradox that is captured in both the symbolic meaning and physical reality of the geographies of social housing, what Hanley sees as ‘the paradox of council housing’. She states,

... that it exists at all in a society dedicated to the acquisition of wealth and property induces pride; that it has to exist at all, because that society excludes so many from the wealth and property that the rest of us enjoy, is a source of shame (2007: 50).

In the academic literature the struggle to find a suitable phrase for these areas has resulted in the development of various descriptive phrases including 'sink estates' (Coleman, 1990), 'problem estates' (Atkinson, 2000; Atkinson and Helms, 2007; Atkinson and Jacobs, 2010; Boland, 2008; Dean and Hastings, 2000, 2003; Fraser, 1996; Johnstone and Macleod, 2007; Johnstone and Mooney, 2007), 'stigmatised community' (Howarth, 2002), 'discredited neighbourhoods' (Warr, 2005), 'broken neighbourhoods' (and MacLeod, 2007), 'representational ghettos' (Slater and Anderson, 2012), 'welfare ghettos' (Hancock and Mooney, 2013), and 'banlieue' (Hatherley, 2012). While these authors do not necessarily mean that these locations are as described and are not necessarily using these phrases in a pejorative way (although Coleman and Hatherley clearly do) the struggle to discursively represent these locations demonstrates the limits of our conceptual and discursive abilities and can tend towards reinforcing stigma rather than challenging it. If nothing else it certainly reflects the apparent dominance of negative readings and connotations generally associated with social housing estates.

Skeggs (2004) provides a further refinement to this argument as she highlights that whilst the term 'class' may have all but disappeared from political rhetoric, alternative references, such as those highlighted above, have been substituted in its place. Furthermore, she argues (2004:112) that the specific naming of areas themselves, for example Wythenshawe, are continually utilised as shorthand to name those whose presence was seen to be potentially threatening and dangerous. Haylett (2001) highlights how this type of naming fed directly into 'New Labour's' approach to the urban poor when she highlights the

'heavy symbolism' that accompanied the launch, by Tony Blair, of a range of New Labour policies designed to tackle social exclusion on Aylesbury Estate in London on the 2nd June 1997.

Not only are there a variety of labels and names available for 'council estates' but those who live there are also deemed to possess, by virtue of living there, certain key and defining characteristics ranging from "passive, dependent and disengaged" (Blokland, 2008:40) to those of a more criminal or threatening nature (Baeten, 2002; Campbell, 1993; Clement, 2007; Damer, 1974, 1989; Fraser, 1996). For Seabrook those so named are really victims of the social and economic restructuring that accompanies the process of post-industrialisation. In discussing the notion of the 'underclass' he suggests that the fragmentation of the traditional working-class exposed those who had been sheltered and accommodated within industrial-based class structures to more visibility.

... the discovery of an 'underclass' in the 1990s is like an exhumation of the remains of the working class, the skeleton left behind when all those who could leave have gone, abandoning those who might have been perceived as the undeserving and the helpless, but were sheltered within the old working class, enfolded by the values, the sometimes punishing charity and abrasive protectiveness of the majority.  
(Seabrook, 1996: 185).

For Hanley, the stigma of growing up or living on a council estate stays with a person for life as an 'aura', a mind-set and something that you cannot step out of. In symbolic terms she sees, in these estates, the British class system 'written' into the architecture of British cities as the working-classes, the poor, are contained within the 'hutches' or 'holding cages' built outside the ring-roads in the outer-urban spaces of the city. (Hanley, 2007:1-2, 4).



It's more a sense you have. A sense that someone, who lives in a proper house, in a proper town, sat on the floor of an office one day with a box of fancy Lego bricks and laid out, with mathematical precision, a way of housing as many people as possible in as small a space as could be got away with. And in doing so, forgot that real people aren't inanimate yellow shapes with permanent smiles branded on their plastic bodies. That real people might get lost in such a place. (5).

Hanley suggests, echoing Seabrook's reflection on the renaming of those who live on estates, that you only need to play word association with the term 'council estate' to reveal the negative associations linked to these words. Thus, estates mean 'alcoholism, drug-addiction, relentless petty stupidity, and a kind of stir-craziness induced by chronic poverty' and for anybody who doesn't live on one it means 'hell on earth' (5-7).

Hanley notes how constantly reaffirmed statements and observations about council estates and their residents remain unchallenged. For example, she notes how newspapers' report that recidivists live on this or that estate as if it is a matter of course that they would. Hanley's work not only focuses on the political and social paradox that council housing appears to present but also demonstrates the dialectic problematic of this particular policy solution to mass housing needs where the creation of low-cost, social and geographical isolation and long-term neglect impacts negatively on the people who live there and some of this behaviour (and certainly the way in which it is interpreted by the mainstream) becomes definitional of the social, economic and cultural value of all the residents. As Hanley (2007) puts it:

Any connection between the physical, economic and social isolation of council estates and the sometimes desperate behaviour of their tenants is ignored, or dismissed, or laughed at, because that's what they're there for: to contain the underserving, un-useful poor. If the feckless poor did not exist, neither would council estates (15).

The combination of economic poverty and the poverty of taste, culture and social behaviour all coalesce in the idea of the council estate resident and, once again, become definitional of the 'quality' of the people who live there:

Poor taste, bad grammar, the betrayal of family history beyond that which is conveniently aspirational: all these traits are now deemed 'council house behaviour' (10).

The news reporting of 'life' on these estates is often rendered as a short vignette which combines morality, power and humour all to the detriment of those who live there. Hanley notes how:

The collision of pot noodles, wife-beating and council estates on a single news clipping seems almost too funny in that way we now have of laughing at the misfortunes of poor, daft people, because it's their fault for being stupid. (10).

Hanley's comments highlight the importance of social 'values', cultural norms and, in Bourdieu's terms, 'taste' (Bourdieu, 1984) in both the construction of social groups and in the stratification of society. The observation, perception and interpretation of social and cultural values and the assumed connections that these are perceived to have with actual moral values

and behavioural norms have become subject to increased critical interrogation. Skeggs (2004, 2011, Skeggs and Loveday, 2012) has demonstrated the complex inter-play between values, cultural practices and value judgements about people (based on the perception of these values and cultural practices) and class and social justice. And I return to this important set of ideas in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight.

One other key theme permeates Hanley's work and that is how the physical construction and location of the council estate, reinforced by the perceptions and approaches of others who do not live there, acts as a method of ensuring that social space is physically stratified, bounded and organised through the urban environment as she notes:

A multitude of confusing voices say one thing and then another, but even that chorus cannot drown out a conviction that working-class people are not rabbits, but people, and as such should not be housed in hutches away from the higher, richer orders (21).

Certainly, as will be seen in the data chapters later much of Hanley's reflections on the ways in which housing estates are seen and their apparent social and symbolic role is reflected in this study of the Leys in Oxford.

## **2.2 Territorial Stigmatisation and the continuum of urban despair.**

There seems to be a public image of any given city which is the overlap of many individual images. Or perhaps there is a series of public images, each held by some significant number of citizens. Such group images are necessary if an individual is to operate successfully within his environment and to cooperate with his fellows. Each individual picture is unique, approximates the public image, which in different environments, is more or less compelling, more or less embracing. (Lynch, 1960:46).

As identified earlier there appears to be persistent forms of discourse that characterises the poor and where they live as both problematic and either implicitly or explicitly as stigmatised in some ways. However, we have also seen how this conceptualisation of people as problematic has also become strongly associated (although for different reasons) with specific spaces, areas and housing types. In this section I analyse the way in which the process and, in particular, the idea of ‘territorial stigmatisation’ has become a significant concept in the analysis of contemporary urban environments and specifically, in relation to large areas of mass, social housing.

A number of scholars draw directly and indirectly on Goffman’s notion of stigma as outlined in his seminal text *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (1963) and extend the application of this idea to a variety of domains (Bunar, 2011; Campbell and Deacon, 2006; Hastings, 2004; Keane and Padilla, 2010; Kelaher, et al., 2010; Link and Phelan, 2001; Palmer, et al, 2004; Stuber and Meyer, 2008). Although Goffman’s work focused on the micro-sociology of day-to-day interactions and how individuals experience the stigma of ‘spoiled’ personhood it has been developed to have relevance at the level of the spatial both in terms of his definitions of stigma but also, in the ways in which stigma is reproduced through interaction, language, definitions and social behaviour. Indeed, the interactional element of Goffman’s work is detectable in the work of a number of key scholars whose research has generated significant insights into the broad issue of social stigma and related areas (for example, see Bourdieu, 1990, Lawler, 2002, 2004, 2005a, Skeggs, 1998, 2004, Wacquant, 2007, 2008).

Scholars have increasingly argued that the impact of geographically located or rooted derogatory and dystopian discourses have an important impact on shaping political responses to poverty and its impacts (Baeten, 2002, 2004; McLeod and Ward, 2002; Merrifield, 2000;

Sampson and Raudenbush, 2004; Sampson, 2009; Schrafran, 2013). Atkinson and Jacobs (2010) develop this approach to argue that the impact of an area's negative reputation leads to residents of public housing being 'thrice damned' (159). First, residents have failed enough to need public housing, second they become labelled as problematic within the broader community as a result of their housing needs and third, on a structural level, the ways in which a 'problematic reputation' further reinforces the difficulty of engaging in viable political projects of investing in public housing.

In their discussion of stigma and regeneration Hastings and Dean (2003) observe that 'every city and town in the UK has neighbourhoods which have reputations for problems such as poverty, crime, drug abuse or physical decay' (1). These 'stigmatised neighbourhoods' are often deemed to have long-standing, intractable problem images rooted in their history (Power 1987, Forest and Kearns, 1999). A number of the characteristics that Hastings and Dean (2003) identify in these neighbourhoods can be seen to apply to Blackbird and Greater Leys including physical isolation and limited leisure and retail facilities. Furthermore, such neighbourhoods receive routine vilification in popular and media discourses, including the portrayal of residents as 'different' and/or 'deviant'. (Hastings and Dean, 2003, Damer 1992, Murie, 1997). Over time, all these factors work together to render these estates as 'places of last resort' both in terms of the local housing system and popular mythology (Reynolds, 1986, Damer, 1992). Ultimately, Skeggs (2004: 112) notes these local areas are often used as shorthand to name those whose presence is seen to be potentially threatening and certainly undesirable.

This approach to specific locations – and the impact it may have on those who live there is of fundamental importance to this thesis. It would seem that there are two major but contradictory themes at work in many approaches to and studies of specific locations or, as commonly thought of, 'communities'. On the one hand, there is the relatively utopic or at

least reasonably positive view that community is a positive thing, that can be either be rediscovered, nurtured backed to life or created through active citizenship, moral and physical regeneration and national and local government action. However, there also exists a persistent representation of specific, named locations (actual communities) that suggest those who live there are almost inherently unable to function as ‘good citizens’ and that these places can never be redeemed as ‘positive communities’. Areas such as the Leys and other ‘council estates’ appear to be caught in the middle of these contradictory discourses and the people who live there destined to be characterised as either in need of remedial, external intervention and help or as active perpetrators of their own misery and social and economic exclusion and, more importantly, as not only resistant to external ‘help’ but directly antagonistic to ‘mainstream’ society and its values. This thesis offers a challenge to these misrepresentations, misconception and misrecognitions (Lawler, 2002; 2004, 2005a,b; Skeggs, 1997, 2004, 2011; Skeggs and Loveday 2012).

Here I examine the cultural, political and social significance of ‘council estates’ in Britain. This will include an examination of the symbolic and metaphoric significance of council estates within British political and social discourses and, to some extent, discourses that can be aligned with historical and contemporary identities and discourses of social class.

In 1996 an interesting volume was added to the Home Office’s Crime Detection and Prevention Series (paper 74) entitled *Policing Problem Housing Estates* (Morris, 1996) which aimed to identify ‘effective practices in policing problem residential areas’ (Morris, 1996:v). The report notes that:

Every police force will have at least one estate or residential area which represents a hotspot, either in terms of a high volume of incidents or as a potential public order problem (Morris, 1996: v).

Despite that fact that only 30 (out of the 43 forces in England and Wales) responded with examples or cases studies of police activity and the remaining thirteen could 'provide nothing suitable' (which may or may not be a datum that at least undermines the absolute nature of Morris's statement is open to debate) the report is robust in its focus on the notion of 'problem housing estates' and, from the 30 'candidates' put forward six were selected for in depth examination and documented '... as providing lessons for more widespread adoption.' (Morris, 1996: v).

Although Morris states the aim was to reflect estates that varied in type and the problems they presented (Morris, 1996:3), it is also the case that the six locations chosen were particularly notorious estates during the timeframe of the project. These being: Toxteth, Liverpool; Broxtowe Estate, Nottingham; Kingsmead Estate, London; Meadow Well Estate, North Shields; Gateshead, Newcastle; Killingbeck, Leeds. Many of these estates have a reputation for potential public disorder incidents. Two case studies (Toxteth and the Meadow Well) in this report achieved national notoriety following, what Morris calls, serious disorders in 1981 and 1991. The Meadow Well disturbance occurred around the same time as 'large scale disorder on estates in Cardiff, Oxford and the Newcastle area' (Morris, 1996:1).

From the point of view of this thesis it is not only interesting to reflect on the language used and focus of this report but that the notion of 'problem housing estate' is so readily linked to almost any area that would appear to both fit the description but that, by inference, is part of the composition of that description. More specifically, once again, we find that the specific incidents that occurred on Blackbird Leys in the early 1990s (the joyriding or 'hotting', repeated confrontations between young men and the police see, for example, Campbell, 1993, Power and Tunstall, 1997) - although thoroughly disputed by those

who lived there at the time in terms of their nature and actuality - are readily linked to other major national markers of estate based disorder and volatility.

The norms and values of the poorest communities are anti-authoritarian and tend towards law-breaking, therefore are open to drug use. Because of this organisations which might challenge drug use either do not exist or are not supported by local people (Home Office 2003:4).

Of course, at one level, it neither matters nor is it possible to establish which construction of the events on the Leys during that period is the more accurate. This is not simply because the power of the official versions of events is so strong. As Stone (1989) noted policy texts and official versions of events present powerful causal stories that not only justify interventions but also reproduce ideology and enact it through action. It is important to stress that you cannot separate ideology and interpretation, experience and value and so on. In this sense, these narratives reflect constructions of 'reality' set against not only the lived experience of individuals but also the ways in which their situatedness within the social and economic order is reflected in their interpretation of events. More than this though, there is reflected in these stories a strong sense of collective identity that appears important to these people. This is interesting as the apparent official valuing of the idea of community frequently fails to recognize that communities themselves are often formed through resistance, opposition and, in some case even disadvantage (Silk, 1999; Amin, 2005; Spriggs, and Allen, 2005; Day, 2006; Sanchez-Jankowski, 2008; Bond, 2011).

The idea that specific locations or areas are labelled in particularly negative ways is, as we have already noted, far from new. As we have seen above Wirth (1938) wrote about zones of social disorganisation in his seminal work on *Urbanism as a Way of Life* and a



number of commentators have introduced their own conceptions of the ways in which specific areas of a city or of cities are mapped and constructed in predominantly negative ways. For Foucault, (1966) 'heterotopias of deviation' have always been created by society. These are 'counter-spaces' that express an absolute 'otherness' which are, by design and function, outside of the rest of society. For Foucault, these spaces were often conceptualised as prisons, homeless shelters, asylums and other such institutions but this idea can also be applied to areas of a city. Krase, (1977) wrote of the 'stigmata' of inner city living and how this was an often over-looked issue for those who lived in seriously deprived areas of a city. Hasting (2004) and Matthews (2010) demonstrate how peristent pathological discourses in relation to the policy understandings of spatial inequalities and area deprivation, along with those who live there, appear to be.

Of course, such considerations might lead us to ask to what extent is social exclusion as much a question of semantics as geography and indeed the role of language and in particular the 'naming' of places remains a critical dimension of the analysis of the territorial stigmatisation. Furthermore, there is a sense that in this form of analysis of 'neighbourhoods' or other specific areas of a city are as much like 'texts' that have to be read and are subject to multiple readings as they are concrete and material spaces. Neighbourhoods, then are not only physically bounded spaces (and some are more physically bounded than others) they are also symbolically bounded and places on to which powerful and all too often negative meanings are attached (Cohen, 1985; Keane and Padislla, 2010; Skeggs, 2004; Wacquant, 2007).

### **2.3 Wacquant and Territorial Stigmatisation.**

In the twentieth century Britain succeeded in giving a very substantial majority of its citizens a decent home – a place that was weather proof and centrally heated with at least one indoor lavatory and bathroom. But Britain gave rather fewer of its people a decent address. Millions of people who subsist on state benefits or poorly paid jobs live in bad places which damage their lives and reduce their children's opportunities. (Schoon, 2001: 154).

Although there are various precursors to the current vogue for 'territorial stigmatisation' it is this term that has recently gained significant conceptual hold on sociological discussions of areas of concentrated social and economic disadvantage in much of the North American and European literature. In particular the work of Loic Wacquant (1996, 1999, 2007, 2008a, 2008b, 2009a, 2009b, 2010) has helped to establish the centrality of this idea to discussion of the impact of an area's reputation on the people who live there. Wacquant's work offers a comparative sociology of the structure, dynamics and experience of 'urban relegation' in the United States and European Union and reveals the emergence of a 'new regime of marginality on both sides of the Atlantic.' (Wacquant, 2007:67). He argues that in these 'neighbourhoods of relegation' we can identify distinctive spatial properties of advanced marginality that manifest as concentrations of social and economic deprivation in isolated and bounded territories which are 'increasingly perceived by both outsiders and insiders as social purgatories, leprous badlands at the heart of the postindustrial metropolis where only the refuse of society would accept to dwell' (2007: 67). For Wacquant, this 'blemish of place' is superimposed on the already existing stigmata traditionally associated with poverty, ethnic origin or postcolonial immigrant status and that the emergence of such

areas threaten to become permanent fixtures of the urban landscape. Wacquant uses very powerful language in his reading of contemporary society linking the current experience of contemporary urban life in some places to Hobbes's view of life reflecting on it as 'barren, chaotic and brutish' (Wacquant, 2008: 1) and care needs to be taken in over-subscribing to his dystopic vision of particular spaces and forms of contemporary urban living (Pattillo, 2009). Furthermore, his assertion that these spaces may become permanent seems to overlook the long history of the existence of the stigmatisation of the poor and where they live which can be traced from the earliest studies of the urban poor right up to the contemporary period. Of course, Wacquant would argue that the difference between his approach and those who have written before him is one of degree in terms of the strength of the current phase of territorial stigmatisation as well as its links to neo-liberal economics, globalisation and the consequent dissolution of 'place' and a loss of a traditional working-class 'hinterland' (Wacquant, 2007: 69-71). He argues:

In every metropolis of the First World, one or more towns, districts or concentrations of public housing are publicly known and recognised as those urban hellholes in which violence, vice, and dereliction are the order of things. Some even acquire the status of national eponym for all the evils and dangers now believed to afflict the dualized city. (67-8).

Wacquant cites Toxteth, Liverpool, Saint Pauls, Bristol and the MeadowWell estate in Newcastle as examples of such areas in England. Drawing on the work of social geographers such as Harvey (1989), he notes that in addition to the economic restructuring experienced in post-Fordism that posits a massive shift on economic organisation, flows, jobs and people in space is accompanied by a similar change in the experience of space itself. This shift, for

Wacquant, is detected in the move from notions of 'place' to one of 'space'. In this analysis, places are seen as full, fixed and stable and, consequently, facilitate forms of social mutuality, the sharing of emotions and meanings that support community solidarity and cohesion. Whereas spaces, on the other hand, which lack such qualities and are more pliable in relation to negative constructions and depictions, characterised by 'mere survival and relentless contest'. (Wacquant, 2007: 70). Wacquant's notions of space and place draw on Lefebvre (1991) who demonstrates the political, maleable and *produced* nature of 'space' over place in his seminal text *The Production of Space*. For Lefebvre highlights the importance of spatial practice, representations of space and representational spaces (along with the proliferation of notions and conceptions of space across multiple disciplines and discourses). For Lefebvre the production of space is a ideological process that employs illusions of transparency and reality to conceal the very fact that (social) space is itself a (social) product that is produced by processes that are ideologically informed and, he argues, space now occupies a hegemonic position within modern societies (Lefebvre 1991: 27, 33, 412). Both Wacquant and Lefebvre's approaches demonstrate the important role imagined and created spaces (in this case those that are territorially stigmatised) and raise the possibility that tackling territorial stigmatisation requires more than trying to communicate effective representations of actual place to counter the production of reputational stigma.

Wacquant's conception of territorial stigmatisation is part of a wider theory of advanced marginality in western societies developed through comparative research in the USA and France and which comprises of six elements (Wacquant, 1996, 2008). The first is territorial stigmatisation which is concentrated in isolated and bounded territories (rather than throughout working-class areas) which are increasingly perceived by both outsiders and insiders as '...social purgatories, leprous badlands...where only the refuse of society would

accept to dwell' (1996:67). Second, is the functional disconnection from macro-economic trends, a process through which marginalised groups are unable to enter the labour market even in times of economic growth let alone economic downturn. This factor is compounded by the third element of the model which foregrounds the deregulation and degradation of wage labour. The fourth element of advanced marginality is the experience of territorial alienation and the dissolution of place through which marginalised groups and individuals experience the loss of a locale which they identify with and feel secure in. The fifth element, the loss of what Wacquant calls a 'hinterland', also impacts on the sense of loss of locale and security as this refers to the erosion of social networks and support that might well have been found in 'traditional' working-class neighbourhoods. The final element of advanced marginality is a symbolic fragmentation resulting in a loss of a shared frame of reference and a shared language to offer resistance to the collective problem of marginalisation (see Wacquant, 1996 , 121-39).

Wacquant emphasises on the ways in which territorial stigmatisation is both imposed on communities from outside and internalised and perpetuated by those who live in these communities. In similar ways to Blokland whose study of a subsidised housing project in New Haven, Connecticut explores how stigmatisation comes about relationally and how residents themselves play a significant role in reproducing the stigma they experience as '... the marked and the marker both matter, or more precisely their relations do'. (2008: 34).

Of course, it does not take a huge conceptual leap to link the idea of stigmatised territorial space with the emergence of 'oppositional cultures' (Massey and Denton, 1993) or 'subterranean culture' (Foster and Hope, 1993) and to extrapolate out this notion across whole populations and sets of residents. This, in turn, begs the question: is 'oppositional culture' a product of social and economic exclusion or, in and of itself, a cause of greater and continued exclusion?

Wacquant's approach has gained considerable purchase in academic (and other) discourses with his work being seen as making a radical break from academic misrepresentation of poverty and inequality, affirming the importance of 'bottom-up' methods and providing a critical reading of 'folk' notions of the 'underclass' and 'ghetto' (Pereira, 2007). However, Wacquant's model, although generally received favourably by academic peers, has been subject to a number of detailed challenges and critiques.<sup>4</sup> These have ranged over a number of key aspects of his approach arguing that the comparative basis of his work is 'oversimplified' (White, 2007), the utility of his comparative case study approach overall (Abu-Lughod, 2007; Nobles, 2010; Western, 2010), his downplaying of the role of race in France (and to a lesser extent Britain) and that his analysis of the 'ghetto' and 'hyper-ghetto' provides an essentialisation of African-American communities that is both invalid and unhelpful (Small, 2007; White, 2007)

Importantly, for me, not only does his work contain some small but irritating errors<sup>5</sup> it is less clear how this process works and how these labels come to be affixed so firmly to some areas and not others. However, Wacquant's model provides a useful heuristic device and framework through which to analyse how and to what extent an area is 'territorially stigmatised'.

While clearly Wacquant's work is important for my analysis here I would also draw attention to the range and scope of arguments made by others employing some form of notion of stigma in relation to particular urban communities and areas. For me, drawing on the

---

<sup>4</sup> Wacquant's work has received considerable attention from the wider sociological and urban studies academic community. In particular *Urban Outcasts: A Comparative Sociology of Advanced Marginality*, (2008), Cambridge, Polity, has been the subject of four special editions of different academic journals: *City*, 11, 3, (2007); *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 33, 3, (2009); *Urban Geography*, 31, 2, (2010), *Urban Studies*, 53, 6, (2016).

<sup>5</sup> For example, Wacquant cites the *Scarman Report* (1982) as a report into the riots that 'shook British cities in the early 1980s' (2008: 32), when in fact this report only considered the Brixton riots of April 1981.

literature reviewed throughout this chapter there appear to be four main elements to the construction of a particular place as territorially stigmatised. First, is the impact of what are termed neighbourhood effects which, at some level, can be objectively identified, though less readily measured especially in terms of affect, and are often informed by official measurements of social phenomena such as deprivation, crime, substance misuse, educational attainment, employment and unemployment, health inequalities and so on. Second, in certain circumstances these neighbourhood effects are translated into stigma at a spatial level as more neutral terms are replaced with more pathologising and deterministic conceptions of these spaces and those who live there. However, this is not a consistent development as many areas that can be seen to have broadly similar objective measures of neighbourhood effects are not deemed to be territorially stigmatised whereas others are. The explanation for this appears to be connected to the third element that needs to be present and that is at least one ‘totemic’ event that acts as a marker – historically, symbolically or empirically – that becomes widely known about (beyond the immediate locality) and is recurrently referred to as a ‘defining example’ of the character of both the place and those who live there. For example, this might include such events as the Broadwater Farm Estate riots in Tottenham (1985), the Paulsgrove disturbances in the late 1990s (Lawler, 2002) or in the case of the Leys, the car thefts, illegal racing and accompanied public disorder of the early 1990s (Campbell, 1993, Power and Tunstall, 1997). Finally, the fourth key factor appears to be the role of the media in both taking up these events and characterisations, linking them to wider existing and perceived social problems, patterns and anxieties (real and/or imagined) and to the wider political rhetoric and policy approaches that are both informed by these discourses and also act to shape and direct these constructions further. However, how, precisely these elements interact, cross-inform and, indeed, come to be significant social and symbolic representations of space and people is far from clear. In the following section I explore these

ideas further through a more detailed reflection on ten studies of ‘problem estates’ conducted over the last thirty years.

## **2.4 Studies of ‘Problem Estates’.**

As we have seen earlier in this chapter and in chapter one the persistent use of the notion of ‘problem estates’ suggests an implicit (if not explicit) norm towards which all members of the population should adhere or at least aspire too. I think this approach can be mapped on to a continuum that runs from a relatively objective attempt to describe such social phenomena in what we might call ‘their own terms’ to more problematic constructions and ‘othering’ of areas and their populations as ‘dangerous’ (Campbell, 1993) and inherently ‘problematic’ (Power, 1998). I argue that the conceptions and assumptions that frame much of the work undertaken and the conclusions reached need to be more critically challenged and the imbalance to some extent be redressed. There are numerous studies of communities, localities, neighbourhoods and estates that could be selected to illustrate this section of the literature review. Starting from the 1950s alone there are myriad studies ranging from Young and Wilmott’s classic 1957 study *Family and Kinship in East London* up to contemporary studies of an anonymised de-industrial Mill town in the North West of England, (Bond, 2011), Burnley (Rhodes, 2012), Bristol (Clement, 2007; Slater and Anderson, 2012), Brixton, (Howarth, 2002), Nottingham (McKenzie, 2012, 2015), Glasgow (Gray and Mooney, 2011) and Hull (Featherstone, 2013) as this form of study appears to return to some favour (Stacy, 1960, 1969; Bell and Newby, 1971; Crow, 2002; Day, 2006; Newby 2008;). There has also been a very significant growth in the international literature with a number of studies of non-British locations being published in US and British journals. These include Australia, (Palmer et al 2004, Mee, 2007), Canada (Kipfer and Petrunia, 2009), France (Garbin and Millington, 2012), Ireland (Devereux, et al., 2011, 2012), The Netherlands, (Jensen and Christensen, 2012), Norway (Brattbakk and Hansen, 2004), Sweden, (Brannstorm, 2004; Beach and



Sernhede, 2011, Bunar, 2011, Sernhede, 2011) and the USA (Blokland, 2003, 2008, Greenberg and Hollander, 2006). What is particularly interesting about a number of these studies is the increased focus on the role ‘reputation’ (usually negative) is seen to play in the (again usually negative) experiences people who live in these areas report to researchers and how this impacts on their lives. Furthermore, since Wacquant’s various interventions around the notion of ‘territorial stigmatisation’ (see in particular, 1996, 2007, 2008) various researchers have looked to utilise this theoretical device to analyse specific locations and the experience or otherwise of territorial stigmatisation (Wassenberg, 2004; Kelhar, et al., 2010, Bond, 2011, Gray and Mooney, 2011, Garbin and Millington, 2012, Jensen and Christensen, 2012, Slater and Anderson, 2012; Hancock and Mooney, 2013).

What is also noticeable is that since the 1980s (following the high-profile riots of those years in a variety of locations across Britain, especially between 1980 (St. Paul’s, Bristol), 1981, (Brixton, South London), 1985, Broadwater Farm, Tottenham, North London and Brixton again), attention shifted to estates on the periphery of cities in Britain, as well as Europe, North America and Australia (see, for example, Campbell, 1993; Noble, et al., 1994; Power and Tunstall, 1997). Although my research draws on a number of these studies both in this chapter and later in the thesis, I wanted to give some more detailed coverage to a selection of ten studies that cover a thirty year period (1986-2015) to illustrate some of the key themes and issues which have tended to characterise studies of ‘problem estates’ and have influenced both the research and policy agendas. These studies also provide clear examples of why my own study has been structured in the way it has.

Reynolds, F, (1986), *The Problem Housing Estate: An Account of Omega<sup>6</sup> and Its People* is a study of ‘one particular problem housing estate’ (13) (anonymised as *Omega*) conducted in a Midlands city between 1981 and 1983. Reynolds maintains that everybody in

---

<sup>6</sup> N.B. The biblical and to some extent apocalyptic metaphor associated with the word *omega* as the last (place) is not lost on the author.

the city, including the residents of the estate themselves, knew it was a problem estate. However, Reynolds also notes that it was less clear what made the estate a problem and set out to examine if people who lived there did have more problems than other citizens or whether this 'awful image' was manufactured. Furthermore, if it was really worse than other places Reynolds sought to examine how this situation had come about since, she argues, other estates in the city - built at the same time in much the same style - which had also taken tenants from the same housing waiting lists as *Omega*, were not deemed to be problematic.

For Reynolds the most appropriate way of exploring these questions was to find out something of the activities, experiences and the views of residents living on the estate by talking to them. The researchers conducted informal interviews with open-ended questions on a list of specific issues while also encouraging spontaneous contributions of any aspect of estate life. They interviewed the members of what they termed a 'random' sample of over one hundred households on the Omega estate (it is not possible to ascertain the actual numbers of respondents from the published research). In addition, to the sample of residents all owners or managers of shops, take-aways, public houses and other commercial premises were interviewed as were 'local figures' (14) such as councillors, church people, teachers and other professionals who worked on the estate in some capacity although no exact numbers of respondents are presented.

One of the most important findings reported in this study was the impact of negative reputation. The author notes that '...the longstanding reputation as an undesirable even criminal area resulted in many individuals and indeed whole families suffering humiliation in their everyday lives' (23). Throughout the study Reynolds notes that this negative reputation is widespread across the city and frequently reinforced through media coverage and the views of professionals, outsiders and reflected in the views and experiences of the residents

themselves. Local media accounts list a familiar set of characteristics of those who live there referring to parental apathy, the idle, the mischievous and the ‘more sinister night people’ (17) reflecting, again, the tendency to people such areas with indistinct but nevertheless threatening figures.

Reynolds reports that everyone interviewed for the research said the reputation of Omega was bad. 25% thought it shared a bad reputation with two other estates in the city while 40% agreed that the reputation was bad but that it had been manufactured by ‘outsiders’ and was not deserved. Around 35% reported that the reputation had negative impacts on their lives as residents (17). Various examples are provided (which correlate with data from other studies) including co-workers being highly negative of where colleagues from the estate lived (‘My workmates call it a reservation’ (18)), differential treatment from the police and residents not supplying their full estate address to prospective employers and employing the generic name of the nearby respectable village as a common strategy to prospective employers, delivery companies and service providers (such as British Telecom). However, Reynolds also found that a significant number of residents had come to internalise the view of the estate as a dangerous and criminal area even though they had no direct experience of anything unpleasant, most notably this manifested as fear of going out at night.

Reynolds offers a series of conclusions which highlight the following factors as ‘contributing to, or aggravating, or causing problems’ (171). The size of Omega, at three thousand households was seen to be an aspect of the difficulties the estate faced, although two smaller estates (1000 households each) demonstrated similar levels of unpopularity and were as ‘troublesome’ as Omega despite not having such a negative reputation (171). One interesting finding was that one estate in the city, Chalkbury, built at the same time as the other three and which was a popular estate with reportedly few problems was situated within the old established boundaries of the city. This finding resonates with the experience in

Oxford where the two main estates built outside the ring-road (Barton and the Leys) suffer from much poorer reputations across the city than the one built at a similar time, Wood Farm, but within the ring-road and located within the established area of Headington. The peripheral location of Omega, added to its size, was seen as a direct cause of issues and contributed to its poor reputation. The estate also suffered from a sense of isolation from the rest of the city; ‘nobody ever passed through on their way to anywhere else’ (172). Reynolds also identifies population composition, housing allocation policy, internal divisions between ‘rough’ and ‘respectable’ families (176) and the generally poor quality of the estate’s built and non-built environment as areas that either created, aggravated or contributed to the problems the residents on the estate faced, concluding:

In such circumstances and with such a prospect what will happen to Omega and to other estates elsewhere which are problem estates ... ? At worst they will gradually and inexorably sink into areas of concentrated and hopeless deprivation in an ever deteriorating physical environment... At best the understanding of the causes of problem estates and the well researched evidence as to what can be done when local authority motivation is high will be put on one side until (if ever) times change and a fair distribution of resources becomes once again a political objective (184).

Damer, S, (1989), *From Moorepark to Wine Alley: The Rise and Fall of a Glasgow Housing Scheme* develops the work undertaken in an earlier article published in 1974 (Damer, 1974) and provides a detailed historical review of the development of social housing in Glasgow with a specific emphasis on the Moorepark housing estate from its inception in 1935 through to the late 1980s. In Damer’s 1974 article he placed significant emphasis on labelling theory as a way of explaining how negative perceptions of people and places were constructed and maintained and the first chapter of the full study of the Moorepark Estate (1989) revisits this approach and catalogues how the categorisation of ‘problem people’ and

‘problem estates’ emerged from government reports of the 1930s and then developed through local authority and national government reports and policy prescriptions, academic research and analysis through to the notion problematic of ‘inner-cities’ (1970s-early 1980s) and on to peripheral estates in the 1980s (see pages 1-20). However, Damer moves beyond the use of labelling theory to present a Marxist critique of both these representations, as an example of the workings of the bourgeois management of the working-classes, and to argue that the underlying motive of even ostensibly progressive public policy (in this case the housing legislation of the 1930s that led to the development of estates such as Moorepark) was to isolate and control sections of the working class seen as ‘underserving’. Damer’s (1989) study is the most openly political of those reviewed here and he clearly sees his role as to counter the destructive combination of bourgeois ideological apparatus that includes not only the management of the working classes by the local and national political classes but the collaboration in this project of academic and professional sociology who ‘merely repeat the ideological formations of capital dressed up in jargon’ (56).

Of particular value in Damer’s study is the ways in which his qualitative data generated from interviews and conversations with residents of Moorepark (although it is important to note that precise numbers of participants are a little vague, see pages 176-178 for particular detail on this) reflects the complexity of social life within any given community or neighbourhood. Damer notes that the people of Moorepark were neither ‘stupid’ nor inarticulate but rather provided substantial (if at times contradictory) insights into their social situation and were aware that social life in the scheme was far from homogenous and highly varied (147).

Barke, M., and Turnbull, G., (1992), *Meadowell: The Biography of an ‘Estate with Problems’* presents another focused ethnographic study of a ‘so-called ‘problem estate’ (3) through the addressing of three principal research questions: what influences formed the

character of Meadowell from its birth and subsequently? What shapes contemporary life of Meadowell and how does it differ from life 'outside'? How do these influences effect the delivery of policy onto the Meadowell estate? Although the authors take a more historical overview of the construction and original peopling of the estate they also give significant focus to the September 'riots' of 1991. These disturbances as I mentioned earlier in this chapter seem to constitute a 'totemic' phenomena not only in the North Estate but on several other peripheral housing estates across Britain, for example Cardiff and the Leys, which all occurred around the same time (Power and Tunstall, 1997). Once again the importance of reputation is stressed by the authors who note that as far as the population of Tyneside at large is concerned estates such as the Meadowell represented a distinctive subculture, one that assumes that all residents of such an area are 'tainted by some form of anti-social view of life' (9).

Although the external view of the nature of Meadowell residents may be based initially on insubstantial evidence and represent nothing more than local mythology, once ingrained in the local consciousness such labelling becomes almost impossible to shake off. (9).

In discussing the ways in which various theories have sought to explain the causes and characteristics of 'problem estates', Barke and Turnbull highlight three main approaches. The first places primary explanation of the origins of 'problem estates' in the policy decisions of local authorities who are seen as responsible for 'dumping' problem tenants into such estates. Over time such concentrated populations of 'problem' people and families ensures the estate acquires a bad reputation making 'decent' tenants leave and new lets to 'decent' tenants increasingly difficult to make.<sup>7</sup> This in turn makes these areas increased recipients of 'dumped' problem tenants thus ensuring a downward spiral. The second approach places the

---

<sup>7</sup> It is worth noting here that Barke and Turnbull's definition of these categories is, at best, weak.

cause of problem estates at the level of design characteristics where those who occupy a weak position in the housing market and therefore possess the least choice in housing terms are allocated the less popular and more problematic housing in terms of design, maintenance and repair. The third approach is one that places the emphasis on the very nature of communities themselves and argues that there are tendencies located within these ‘problem populations’ which lead to the development of a kind of sub-culture that rejects the norms and values of ‘mainstream’ society and develops alternative standards of behaviour in their place. Barke and Turnbull draw attention to the passive position the first two approaches place residents in and that although the third approach implies some form of reactive response from residents this is cast in a highly negative light. They summate:

All three theories imply that local people are incapable of acting on their own account in a positive or constructive way, all three suggest that local people are incapable of helping themselves...this is far from being the case and to interpret such areas and their residents with crude generalisations about helpless victims or anti-social hooligans is neither helpful nor accurate. (9).

Campbell, B (1993), *Goliath: Britain's Dangerous Places* represents a slightly different type of contribution to discussions of ‘problem estates’ arising out of concerns about the outbreak of disorder on a number of peripheral estates across England and Wales in the early 1990s (Power and Tunstall, 1997). Inspired by these events Campbell visited three large peripheral estates in England and Wales: Ely, Cardiff, Meadowell, Tyneside and Blackbird Leys, Oxford. These areas were, for Campbell as well as others, areas that had ‘exploded’ into riots at the end of the summer of 1991 as fires and fighting ‘bled across municipal suburbs’ and ‘angry young men made their mark on history’ (1993: ix). While this book is not an academic study but rather a journalistic treatment of the phenomena of these riots and an exploration of the causes and contexts for them it is significant for my study because of its

focus (on the Leys) and the considerable impact it had on both academic and policy conceptions of peripheral housing estates and the causes of disorder they experienced. Although Campbell conducted interviews with young men and other residents on the three estates as well as interviews with police officers in the three areas (see 1993: iv) the book lacks any rigorous review of methods, sample size or indeed positioning within the relevant literature in spite of which it became very much an authority on the life on Britain's housing estates in the 1990s. I have included it here as the text had a significant impact in academic as well as more popular and policy circles and clearly shaped the interpretation of these areas for other authors – including academics – who did not take the time to visit these areas or review the research materials available (See, for a particular example, McGuigan 1996 pages 113-5). Furthermore, the text focuses directly on a specific episode of public disorder on Blackbird Leys ('the alter ego of Oxford', 1993:31) which, as we will see in the data chapters later, is interpreted very differently by residents of the estate who lived there at the time. In addition, Campbell's book can also be seen to contribute to the on-going construction of the territorial stigmatisation of the area, indeed, an almost foundational moment in the construction of the Leys in its current form as an area of unruly youth, crime and disorder.

The central focus of Campbell's book is the role of masculinities in explaining the conflict between the police, authority and local, young males engaged in lower level crime and disorder in each of the three estates. In the case of Oxford, Campbell is quick to draw on what she sees as the important links between motor sport (Silverstone Grand Prix Circuit), the automotive manufacturing industry (British Leyland and then Rover in Cowley) and the theft of high performance cars and subsequent 'hotting' displays carried out in and around the centre of the Blackbird Leys estate ('the arena', 1993:29) by young, unemployed males during the eighteen month period from summer 1990 to winter 1991. The book also examines the response to these events by the Thames Valley Police which culminated in a series of



confrontations between the police and local youth on the estate between August 29th and September 4th 1991.

Campbell writes of the ‘night boys’ (c/f Wacquant’s notion of ‘housing estate youths’ 2008:5) who defy the definition of themselves as a ‘passive underclass’ and present themselves as figures of resistance and challenge to the authorities through a ‘theatre of car crime’. On this stage the young men performed their masculinity and its relationship to power, speed, machinery and transcendence and in doing so both entertained the residents of the Leys and defied and humiliated the police. Campbell goes on to detail the conflict between the joyriders, some residents and the police and notes the ambiguity with which many of the residents of the Leys responded to the events during that week. She notes how the police in effect enforced a curfew on the nights of September 1st, 2nd and 3rd and effectively sealed off the estate. She notes how residents (not just the ‘night boys’) saw these actions as an ‘invasion’ (42) and questioned the legitimacy of police actions. In the aftermath debate focused on whether the estate had been protected or punished by the police and residents questioned the day-to-day absence of police from the estate compared to the arrival of officers, in riot gear, en masse.

In her analysis Campbell draws attention to the combination of factors that led to the creation of this episode on the Leys. She highlights the peripheral location of the estate, its lack of connectivity with the rest of the city in both physical and social terms, the rapid de-industrialisation of the area with the contraction of the automotive industry in the 1980s and the impact this had on working-class culture. Drawing on Lord McCarthy et al’s (1990) independent inquiry into the proposals for closure of the Cowley works she argues:

Within a single generation a major tradition of employment, political alignment, income and identity for working-class men, indeed a tradition that formed cultures of masculinity, was all but extinguished. (Campbell, 1993: 32).

For Campbell the explanation of why such peripheral estates had become 'Britain's dangerous places' lies not only in the patterns of deprivation, economic decline and lack of employment opportunities in these areas but is also a consequence of the decline of traditional working class male identities based around work and the search for masculine identities through the performance of violent confrontation between and by both young men from these estates and those in uniform.

Power, A, (1998), *Estates on the Edge: The Social Consequences of Mass Housing in Europe* provides a major, comparative survey of social housing across five European nations which have historically pursued the development of state funded mass social housing: France, Britain, Germany, Denmark and Ireland. The survey covered 20 'unpopular estates' across these five European countries and maps how these estates deteriorated over time and how national and local governments and landlords, in particular, sought to address this decline. Overall the research demonstrated, for Power, that 'government sponsored mass social housing was bound to be used to meet the government target of housing the needy' (1998: 402). Power concludes that the combination of location, physical structure, weak management and social targeting 'created catastrophic decline' as 'residents lost any commitment to stigmatised areas, creating a potentially violent, destructive situation from which all sought to withdraw' (402). Employing the metaphor of 'rescue', Power notes how as 'disintegration threatened' national and local governments, landlords, tenants and other bodies sought to address the on-going decline of these estates.

Power's study provides a large-scale and detailed survey that draws on a substantial range of other primary research, policy documentation, national and local government data and case study data derived from 'a detailed examination of one extreme example from each country'. (Power, 1998: 29). Much of the information informing the case studies was gathered from representatives from each estate at a three-day European workshop. This included the 'owners' of the estates (1998:29) who provided exact and detailed material of common social and organisational problems. Additional information was also gathered from additional visits to each estate, press coverage and 'ongoing contact' with the main organisations involved (1998: 29). Power also states that local managers, city officials, researchers and local residents 'all contributed to the case studies' (29). However, it is not clear how many local residents were involved in this process or through what processes they contributed and Power's work is limited by a lack of clear input from those who actually live on these estates. Rather, this survey is heavily reliant on official readings of these spaces via both narrative and interview data along with aggregated quantitative data and press coverage, all of which can present very specific readings of these spaces and those who live there. Power's use of dramatic language (for example, rescue, chaos, catastrophic decline, disintegration, social ghettos) lends itself to a particular evaluative discourse that excludes more nuanced and balanced reflections and suggests a strong political dimension to her analysis.

One of the most valuable aspects of Power's survey is that it does highlight the need to be alert to the individual and distinctive characteristics of each individual area of social housing and I think the study demonstrates that whilst some general processes, structural issues and similarities between all areas of social housing can be identified it is also important to consider each area studied as a study of a specific place at a particular time – rather than over-play generalisations to other areas and estates.

What is also interesting about Power's study is that many of her conclusions about how to tackle many of the issues that create problems and difficulties to residents (amongst others) on these estates are interesting and valid. For example, the recognition that change requires both on-going investment and a 'patchwork' of solutions that have a strong local focus, community involvement collective and consistent support and strong links to with the rest of the city – all issues that are reflected in both the wider literature and, indeed, in my own findings from residents of the Leys. But, unfortunately, the overwhelming desire to demonstrate the teleological flaws in the principle of mass social housing, coupled with the tendency to employ dystopian writing style colours the study. For Power it is clear that the very rationale of state planned and funded mass social housing projects is inevitably destined to fail in delivering sustainable solutions to housing issues by its very conception. For me, this sort of approach can also be seen to contribute to the on-going creation of a negative analytical framework that further de-humanising of the discourses that characterise the approach to social housing and those who live there.

Charlesworth, S, (2000), *A Phenomenology of Working Class Experience*, presents an interesting attempt to combine Bourdieu's approach to sociological analysis with a more direct study of the phenomenological aspects of the experiences of the working class individuals in the post-industrial city of Rotherham. Charlesworth's study draws on interviews with 43 local residents which are contextualised within a more expansive (though unspecified) source of ethnographic materials. These interviews and other data led to the creation of a 350,000 word archive of the thoughts of the people of the town which the author states is still developing (10). This archive has been utilised to provide a number of further studies and articles that explore aspects of these thoughts such as working-class space, being and experience, suicide, violence and drug use (Charlesworth, 2004, 2006, 2007).

Although ostensibly a study of social class and deprivation and the wider impacts of these on individual and collective experience, by locating these problems socially and culturally the work is also a ‘testimony of the dying of a way of life; the extinction of a kind of people’ (Charlesworth, 2000: 1). For Charlesworth, Rotherham is a ‘dead man’s town’ (2000:1) a metaphor which he appears to apply more generally to all post-industrial towns. This is very much a tale of those ‘left behind’ who cannot ‘buy their way out of the conditions and into the protected elite spaces of the English middle and upper classes’ (2). In this study Charlesworth sees everyday misery and stigmatisation deriving from ‘invisible sources’ which are constituted by and within a group of people who have come to know themselves in a certain, predominantly negative, way as a result of their life experiences. Indeed, for Charlesworth the impact of the deprivation and stigmatisation that has arisen from the experience of post-industrial social and economic collapse has led to the creation of a group of people who are so dispossessed that they ‘understand their lives the least and are also the least able to articulate their existence’ (2). This condition manifests as muteness and silence. Charlesworth’s project is an ambitious one that attempts to capture the nature of experience of living in Rotherham, the scope of sociological investigation and what ought to be the relationship between the sociological research, its reception and a political and social practice that might facilitate more of a reaction from those of us not subject to such experiences. Charlesworth maintains that their struggle to give voice to this experience is registered in the broken syntax, the sighs and truisms that are the impact marks of the world that they know, uncertainly, through the pointless pain of their boredom, the wastage their embodiment registers in its growing inertia to experience itself, the thrill of new experiences being replaced by fear born of rejection (Charlesworth, 2000: 28). Of particular interest is that Charlesworth’s study focuses so directly on the cultural response to post-industrial society and life-world that has emerged amongst those he interviewed and worked with in

Rotherham. For Charlesworth the destruction of a way of life so structurally linked to industrial manufacturing that was characterised by coherence, a common understanding of the everyday, based on mutual respect and shared values, has led to the emergence of a subsequent life of incoherence, muteness and silence as people have grown up as a poor and stigmatised group cut off from the mainstream of society. But unlike some, who place responsibility for the emergence of alternative cultures and 'negative' behaviours on those who live in particular areas, Charlesworth sees the experiences in Rotherham (as in other towns) as a direct outcome of what has been done to these people by economic restructuring and post-industrial social re-organisation. Unlike Barke and Turnbull (1992), Charlesworth does suggest that unlike residents of the Meadowell those in Rotherham have not responded by developing alternative cultures and negative behaviours but rather they have responded with silence, alienation and exclusion.

Dean, J, and Hastings, A, (2000), *Challenging Images: Housing Estates, Stigma and Regeneration* places the role of stigma and reputation at the centre of an analysis of housing estates and sustainable regeneration. The study notes how not only do many of the UK's 'worst' housing estates endure material disadvantage but that they also 'suffer poor reputations' (Dean and Hastings, 2000:vii) and that problematic reputations can reinforce or even magnify an estate's material difficulties. Dean and Hastings conducted their research on three different housing estates: Meadow Well, North Shields (as we have already seen the subject of a major study in its own right in by Barke and Turnbull published in 1992) Greater Pilton, Edinburgh and Castle Vale, Birmingham. Dean and Hastings describe these areas as all having a '...long-standing poor reputation associated with the history of neighbourhood in the local area' although they do not directly address how such reputations are formed (2000: 2). They also note how each of these estates '...suffers from the more recent stigmatisation of social renting in general' (2000:2). All three estates were sites of major regeneration

initiatives in the mid-to-late 1990s and Dean and Hastings were particularly interested in exploring how regeneration initiatives could challenge established poor reputations. Indeed, the three sites were chosen because they had undergone substantial regeneration, had a 'problematic image' and that the importance of addressing that image had been recognised in the approach to the regeneration of these estates (Dean and Hastings, 2000: 51). The research consisted of a mixed-methods approach including focus groups with over 209 estate residents and non-residents, aged 18-45 who were in secure employment with separate groups being held for those renting and those owning property on the estate. In addition, individual interviews were held with key individuals such as local employers, key regeneration actors and representatives of the local media, the number of which varied from area to area. These interviews were designed to identify the 'nature of the image problem' and the ways different actors responded to that image and perceived their own role in maintaining or challenging such images (2000: 51). The research also utilised a 'mystery shopper' where researchers, posing as potential home buyers, contacted 18 estate agents offering low-cost property for sale in each area.

Dean and Hastings argue that their research demonstrates how an estate's bad reputation and the consequent stigmatisation of place has a direct and negative impact on the quality of life as a direct result of negative stereotyping. Indeed, Dean and Hastings argue that unless specific attention is paid to addressing issues of stigmatisation during official programmes of regeneration then those regeneration efforts will be ultimately ineffective.

Dean and Hastings' research details the multiple ways in which residents of stigmatised estates believe they are discriminated against and suggest that this demonstrates how the reputation of an area is critical to the lives of residents and how this should be a key concern of regeneration processes (2000: 14). Dean and Hastings categorise these multiple impacts under the headings of economic, relationships, service delivery, media, and the

emotional. Economic impacts include access to employment, obtaining house or car insurance, obtaining credit and other financial services, the buying and selling houses. The impact of stigma on relationships including friends and family, colleagues and meeting 'new people' and how each set of these relationships can be negatively affected by living on an estate with a bad reputation, as one resident of Pilton put it 'No matter where you go, if you mention where you come from, you're classed as muck' (2000:16). In terms of service delivery the authors reported that service providers held a low opinion of the estates and those who lived there resulting in the receipt of lower quality services than other parts of the area. This manifested not only as both lower quality services delivered less frequently but also in negative attitudes and behaviours of frontline staff who were reported as making disparaging comments to residents as well as making less effort to provide services to them. Residents' experiences of the media were frequently negative and they reported believing that the majority of media coverage was negative in both content and tone and that the estate where they lived received unfair, partial and inaccurate media coverage and that more positive stories about the estates and its residents were rarely reported. Finally, residents reported that the stigma they experienced impacted on virtually all aspects of their lives making them feel angry, hurt and upset. They described feeling like 'second-class citizens' although Dean and Hastings also found some residents divided the estate into those who did deserve their reputation (others) and those who did not (themselves and their friends or those they judged as 'good neighbours').

Whilst Dean and Hastings state that they did not seek to corroborate the residents' claims and note that a number of these claims were actively disputed by service providers, employers and others, they stress that it was the residents' experiences and perceptions of prejudice that were important. They also state that the '...weight of the evidence points to lives that are impoverished by the operation of stigma' and that, as such approaches to



regeneration must take the issue of stigma and how to challenge the negative reputations of such estates as a central element of any plans to regenerate such areas.

Smith, D, (2005), *On the Margins of Inclusion: Changing Labour Markets and Social Exclusion in London* seeks to explore how global processes influence and shape local events and how these may impact on an individual's sense of 'ontological security' (1) through the consideration of what he terms as the 'adaptive reactions' of a residents of a predominantly white working class housing estate (the one he foregrounds as not a 'sink estate') in South London. Smith seeks to develop an understanding of social exclusion that locates the individual's perceptions of exclusion as central to that understanding and compensates for the relative absence of commentary on the actual experiences of those classed as 'socially excluded' that he sees as characterising the bulk of the literature on poverty and welfare produced in the 1980s and 1990s. He notes that people with direct experiences of poverty have no control over how they are presented or represented in policy interventions designed to 'deal with them' and highlights the persistence of 'ideological terrains' and assumptions about the poor and dependency that have endured from the nineteenth century. However, he also argues that to some extent the equation of poverty with unemployment and therefore welfare dependency of some form or another is becoming increasingly redundant as the composition of the poor has changed, under the influence of globalisation and economic restructuring, with the outcome that the largest single group of poor people are actually in work – be it low-paid and insecure.

Smith adopts a qualitative and biographical approach in his study and conducted 36 in-depth interviews. He recruited participants through snowball sampling and, whilst recognising this may create issues around the sample composition he argues, drawing on Plummer (1983), that this approach yields valid data. Smith presents a detailed discussion of how different groups of economically marginal people have adapted and responded to shifts

in the labour market and welfare system that have accompanied the emergence of ‘post-industrial’ society. This work also focuses on how such responses to change (through, for example, the meshing of informal and formal economic activity) may contribute to patterns of community-based exclusion and provides a dynamic and historically situated analysis of people’s responses to the structural constraints they face in a specific locality.

Rogaly, B and Taylor, B, (2011), *Moving Histories of Class and Community: Identity Place and Belonging in Contemporary England* offers a study of three neighbouring social housing estates in Norwich: the Larkman, North Earlham and Marlpit. Once again the importance of the impact of an apparent negative reputation the estate has on those who live there and how residents narrate this experience - often through the use of the idea of ‘shame’ (2) – is highlighted. The authors note that both the causes and the outcomes of what might be seen as the overall impact of poverty are seen by non-residents as ‘being the responsibility of the individual or the area concerned’ (2) and they draw attention to the impact of ‘deeply universalising stereotypes that link style of dress and speech with educational aspirations, involvement with welfare and social control agencies and patterns of family behaviour’ in a decontextualized way (3). These authors aim to ‘turn this phenomenon on its head’ by offering a case study of a specific area and through the exploration of the lives of individuals within in it, to foreground the ‘importance of understanding how individual lives are closely entwined with changes at the local, national and international scales’ (3).

Central to Rogaly and Taylor’s approach is the degree to which the ‘representations and categorisations of powerful outsiders have influenced people’s lived experiences, spatial practices and social identifications’ (22). Drawing on Jenkins (1996), Bauman (2004) and Brah (2007), they attach specific importance to the relational nature of identity formation and, consequently, that idea that identity is always a process rather than a finished project or outcome and an area or individual’s identity is best understood as a constant interplay

between those social categories created and deployed by (the powerful) others and those recognised by the individual or group themselves. They also note that local-level studies of working-class communities have a tendency to place too much weight on categorisation leading to the further reproduction of power-laden categories and stereotypes whilst eliding the importance of the intersections of class, gender, race and other important categories (see also Lawler, 2004, 2005a, 2005b; Skeggs, 1997, 2004).

Rogaly and Taylor use this case study of the three estates to question the degree to which living in close proximity automatically gives rise to a meaningful sense of community. They argue that 'working classness' has often been associated by middle class writers with particular places and with the idea of 'community' particularly in relation to policy (14-15). Rather, they seek to challenge the assumed links between geographical borders of a place and socially bounded communities and identities. Put simply, they argue for a more nuanced and sophisticated understanding of space, community and identity than those that characterise both academic research and policy prescriptions of government. Thus, for Rogaly and Taylor (2011):

While place remains for some an important part of feelings of community, people's notions of place and their spatial ties are not necessarily congruent with what might be defined by outsiders as a 'community'. Similarly, an individual's network of social relations may be bound up with a particular place, extend far beyond it, or more probably combines aspects of both. And crucially, people within a particular locality cannot be assumed to follow similar patterns, and hence to have similar conceptualisations of 'community' (19)

Rogaly and Taylor (2011) employ a mixed methods approach involving qualitative interviews (open-ended with a focus on life histories, some were as long as three hours) with 26 male and 47 female residents of all ages though there were more middle-aged and older people involved. Some individuals were interviewed as couples or siblings and a small number were interviewed more than once although it is not clear on what basis this was decided. They also interviewed seven women and two men (mostly middle class professionals) who had worked on the estate. The researchers spent time in the local and national archives to explore the role and motivation of state actors in the creation of the estate. In addition, they engaged in a degree of ethnographic work and kept regular field notes for this aspect of the research. Rogaly spent three months in autumn 2005 living in a house on the North Earlham estate with Taylor visiting each day from her home in Suffolk. Taylor also continued to visit the estates at least twice a week until the last interview was completed in October 2006 (23). The authors make specific reference to their location as white middle class researchers and explore how the interviews and the ethnographic work were themselves ‘relational encounters’(23)

McKenzie, L, (2015), *Getting By: Estates, Class and Culture in Austerity Britain*, is a study of St. Anns, Nottingham which locates the research fully within the post New Labour era of austerity which accompanied the Conservative/Liberal-Democrat coalition government elected in 2010. This full length study develops many of the themes first addressed in McKenzie’s 2012 article ‘A Narrative from the Inside, Studying St. Anns in Nottingham: Belonging, Continuity and Change’, which draws on the author’s long-term ethnography of St. Anns estate, on which she has lived for 25 years, which began in 2005. Both the article and the full-length study provide important reflections on the role of the researcher as an ‘insider’ as well as consideration of innovative methodologies and approaches to research. McKenzie’s work is a self-conscious (and clearly stated) attempt to highlight how damaging

misconceptions about and misrecognition of the residents of estates are for those who live there. She argues that this systematic prejudice has become institutionalised through the courts and legal system and, consequently, works to systematically exclude those at the very bottom.

McKenzie, inspired by the Coates and Silburn study of St. Anns published in 1970, set out to map not only the socio-economic changes that had impacted on the estate over the last forty years but also to explore local senses of belonging, value and identity amongst residents of the estate. McKenzie seeks to address issues of the ‘symbolic violence’ inflicted on the poor ‘for many generations’ through a variety of modalities and shifting definitions, by the use of representations and negative language (for example, the ‘underclass’, ‘Broken Britain’, ‘bad behaviour’) and through the cumulative impact of academic research and policy prescriptions, for example, The Centre for Social Justice’s 2006 report *Breakdown Britain* which firmly places responsibility for poverty and social exclusion on the individual and has strongly influenced government approaches to welfare reform over the last five years (2015: 7-18).

McKenzie’s ethnographic research was undertaken between 2005 and 2013, although it is informed by a lifetime of living on the estate, and the focus of the research is council estate life. This includes the inequalities and disadvantages that residents both perceive and directly experience not only in economic terms but, as important for McKenzie, is what she sees as the cultural dimension of inequality that feeds into stigma. Drawing on the work of scholars such as Skeggs (1997, 2004), Lawler (2005) and Tyler (2013), McKenzie stresses the centrality of concepts such as representation, value, disrespect, misrecognition and non-recognition and how these interplay with the way people speak, their accents, what they wear and their ‘tastes’ which all contribute to the stigmatisation of those who live on St. Anns. McKenzie notes that the residents are all too aware of how they are negatively represented

and looked down on and how these representations can have serious, negative impacts on people's life chances and opportunities.

## **2.5 Conclusion.**

We can discern general patterns in approaches to studying the poor, the working classes, 'problem people' and the places where they live that emerges through this review of the literature. First, there is a general move over time from studies that predominantly provide descriptive records which highlight the material conditions of the poor to those that reflect the application of increasingly complex social theory which places much greater emphasis on the experiences and meaning of 'being poor' and the social and cultural implications that flow from this analysis. Second, these studies all demonstrate how, to varying degrees and in different ways, certain populations and areas are targeted and constructed through the use of language, images, representations and quantitative data, and how this impacts on the reputation of these areas and those who live there.

Third, there is also a theme within these studies (one mirrored in many of the smaller scale, qualitative studies of specific areas and estates for example, Bond, 2012; Gray and Mooney, 2011; Howarth, 2002; Jensen and Christensen, 2012; Jupp, 2008, 2013; McKenzie, 2012; Reay and Lucey, 2000; Slater and Anderson, 2012; Watt, 2006, 2013) that suggests that many of these conceptualisations are at least questionable when explored at the local level. Indeed, qualitative studies which explore everyday life of the communities that can be or are seen to be experiencing forms of 'stigmatisation' tend to demonstrate somewhat different perceptions and experiences of these spaces and the social networks and interactions from those who live there.

Finally, building on Hastings and Dean (1993), as well the studies discussed above, we can begin to identify a set of characteristics that can be seen to constitute a working model of the 'problematic estate'. These include; a planned, social housing development, a

peripheral or marginal geographical location, long-standing (local and national) problematic reputation, high-levels of officially documented deprivation, the political economy of the area and recurrent targeting of the area for regeneration programmes and other interventions. The estates that fit this model can be located along a continuum, rather than fixed on an absolute scale, that ranges from a loosely defined 'poor reputation' right up to the hyper-dystopic readings of communities that Baeten describes as 'hypochondriac geographies of the city' (2002: 103).

## **Chapter Three: Discourses about the ‘poor’: conceptions of the underclass.**

### **3.1 Introduction.**

Originally, when I began my research, I had intended to focus on the policy approaches of New Labour to issues of regeneration, social exclusion and community cohesion. However, as my research progressed I found that my original emphasis was too weighted to the policy aspects of the New Labour administrations and not focused enough on the voices of my participants. In some ways I wanted to engage with Smith’s (2005) argument that analysis of issues related to government policies and communities focus too much on ‘top-down’ initiatives rather than the voices of those who are often subject to these policy interventions. Initial analysis of my interview data suggested to me that I was missing the point and importance of my participants’ contribution if I did not focus more directly on their contributions. Consequently, during the course of my research I have altered the emphasis of the thesis away from a direct focus on the policy prescriptions of New Labour to a greater focus on the target of much of that policy: ‘the community’. In doing this I decided to foreground the narratives and experiences of my participants – or as Back would say - to pay them serious attention in Back’s terms (2007). To focus on the rich data and what it might tell us about how individuals and groups interact with and make sense of their everyday lives and how they respond to macro-forces that directly and indirectly shape their lives and environments they live in. Importantly, initial analysis of the interview data alerted me to how participants narrated and understood how they, and where they lived, were seen by others, how they were categorised and the effects they saw this as having on their lives. It also became clear that there was a significant disjuncture between how ‘outsiders’ saw the estate and those who lived there and how ‘insiders’ expressed their experiences and value of living on the estate.



This shift in emphasis leaves the role of policy discussions highly relevant but in different ways to how I originally conceived of it. Rather than focusing in the scope, nature and impact of policy prescriptions themselves I explore them here as a further example of the discursive frameworks through which ‘problem people’ and ‘problem places’ are constructed, narrated and conceptualised within policy discourses (Purvis and Hunt, 1993; Atkinson, 1999; 2000; Furbey, 1999; Lund, 1999; Fairclough, 2000; 2003; Watt, 2000, 2008; Watt and Jacobs, 2000; Richardson and Jensen, 2003; Lees, 2004; Clarke, 2005; Fremeaux, 2005; Macleavy, 2006; Johnston and Mooney, 2007; Johnstone and MacLeod, 2007, 2011; Matthews, 2010; Mooney, 2010; Mooney and Neal, 2010).

Of particular importance was significant emphasis placed on the notion of ‘community’ in the policy discourses of New Labour as they sought to tackle social exclusion, urban deprivation and regeneration (Collins, 1997; SEU, 1998; 2000; 2001; Levitas, 1996, 1998, 2000; Imrie and Raco, 2003; Fremeaux, 2005; Atkinson and Helms, 2007; Craig, 2007; Wallace, 2007; Brent, 2009; Hancock, et, al., 2012; Hancock and Mooney, 2013). In addition, this shift in emphasis also complements the analysis of other key sources of discourses, images and representations which includes printed media and academic and quasi-academic treatments of both the notion of community which have been explored in the first two chapters of this thesis (Day, 2006, Lynsey, 2007, Robertson, et al, 2008). It also complements the ways in which the specific communities of Blackbird and Greater Leys, East Oxford are repeatedly constructed through multiple discourses which will be explored in chapters six, seven and eight (Campbell, 1993, Harvey and Hayter, 1993, Lavery, 1997, McGuigan, 1996).

To briefly reiterate, in chapter two I explored what can be seen as the contradiction or paradox of social housing. On the one hand the objective of providing mass, quality, affordable social housing to a large section of the British working-classes can be seen as a

progressive solution to mass housing need and inadequate market provision (Hanley, 2007); on the other the very nature of this provision has become seen as a shorthand term for social disorganisation and failure (Skeggs, 2004, Hanley, 2007, Johnson and Mooney, 2007, Watt, 2008). This process is both the outcome of a long, historically situated and negative construction of the urban poor which is also characterised by an on-going misrecognition and re-inscription of the working classes which reflects contemporary political, moral and social anxieties and pre-occupations (Haylett, 2001; Lawler, 2002 2005; McDowell, 2002, 2007, 2008; Reay and Lucey, 2000, Skeggs, 1997, 2004, 2011; Skeggs and Loveday, 2012; Vincent, Ball and Braun, 2008, 2010).

Running parallel (but not necessarily reflected in) the empirical study of specific communities is an equally important discussion about how the people most often of central focus of these studies – ‘the poor’ – are represented, categorised and defined. In this section I present a summary of how inhabitants of social housing estates have often been constructed through a variety discourses. I make the argument that there are a persistent set of discourses, images and representations that are highly significant in informing and structuring dominant conceptions of specific places, the people who live in them and the social structures and groups that they are organised into (for example, the ‘problem family’, ‘youth gangs’, the ‘unemployable’, the ‘welfare scrounger’ and so on). I also include in this section some of what can be seen as the ‘short-hand’ terms that are periodically deployed to characterise both people and the current state of the nation. Of course, in terms of quantitative data analysis we can identify clusters of statistical signifiers that would appear to correlate or perhaps even confirm the presence of a ‘residuum’ (Parkin, 1979), a ‘sub-strata’(Giddens, 1973) or a relatively ‘stagnant population’ (Sinfield, 1981) for example the Indices of Multiple Deprivation and Census data.

However, the attribution of generic social behaviours, values, norms and aspirations to the ‘numbers’ who make up these data are more or less entirely assumed. All too readily a ‘common-sense’ reading of the relationship between social status and social behaviour is advanced (Mann, 1992); an analytical approach that the social sciences should be seeking to challenge and annul and not, no matter how indirectly, affirm (Damer, 1989).

Furthermore, what the data (in and of itself) does not and cannot do, of course, is tell us anything about the attitudinal (moral or otherwise) characteristics of the individuals and families who are aggregated into these data sets. Unfortunately however, these empirical accounts feed directly into the long historical context to this process ranging from generalised discussions of the ‘deserving and underserving poor’ (Katz, 2013), ‘the underclass’ (Macnicol 1987; Mann, 1992, 1994; Marshall, et al., 1996; Katz, 1993; Wilson II, 1987, 2013) to more time-bound and focused (though no less obscure) concepts including: ‘chavs’, ‘problem families’, ‘problem estates’, ‘sink estates’, ‘feral youths’, ‘Yob Britain’ and, most recently ‘Broken Britain’ or ‘Broken Society’. Some scholars would add in other ‘zombie concepts’ here such as intergenerational cultures of unemployment (MacDonald, et al., 2014), but for now, I will focus my attention on a discussion of the above and the way they can be seen to inform academic, political and popular discourses.

### **3.2 Reading Policy Discourses.**

In commenting on contemporary discussions of urban environments, Baeten (2002) argues that all too frequently they employ sets of nineteenth century terms and concepts to describe and define the ‘21<sup>st</sup> Century urban dystopia’. In so doing, he argues, these discourses not only reveal much about particular ways of seeing (and not seeing (see Burke, 1989) but also restrict the development of more informed or innovative ways of understanding the urban condition. He argues that the persistence of these approaches stems from the long-term ‘bourgeois’ fear of the poor as he states:

The bourgeoisie urban dystopia built upon repulsive but remarkably powerful imagined geographies of the urban poor that have persisted throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. (107).

Of course, this does not mean that urban poverty and the experiences that accompany it are simply ‘imagined’ and therefore not real but rather that both ‘... academic and more popular interpretations of urban poverty thrive on the most peculiar premises and prejudices that can lead to disturbing conclusions and solutions’ (107). Baeten usefully highlights the role of language and discourse in shaping the imagined geographies of the urban poor and we can trace this approach through a range of policy interventions and in recent years a number of scholars have placed increasing emphasis on the importance of applying forms of discourse analysis to reveal the narratives that inform policy development (see for example, Finnegan, 1998; Furbey, 1999; Atkinson, 2000; Watt and Jacobs, 2000; Fremeaux, 2005; MacLeavey, 2006; Garrett, 2007; Johnston and Mooney, 2007; Matthews, 2010; Wiggan, 2012).

For example, Atkinson (2000) argues that the role of narratives is crucial to understanding how we gain knowledge about the world in the sense that much of what we know derives from stories. As such, narratives are ways of presenting and re-presenting the world, or aspects of it, in textual forms which interpret the world in particular ways. Atkinson (2000: 213) maintains:

Narratives attempt to project a particular version of reality, seeking to organise it in a certain manner while simultaneously attempting to mark or deny contradictions - a form of closure or what is termed a strategy of containment. In this sense what is absent from a narrative may be as important as what is present.

Matthews (2010) notes how analysis of UK urban regeneration policies over the last forty years demonstrates a path-dependency or a historic legacy of a ‘mega-discourse’ that pathologises spatial communities as a general feature of urban regeneration policy (2010:223). For Matthews, despite changes in government, policy direction and emphasis and the extent and nature of policy interventions there remains a continuity of discourse which constructs certain spatial communities as ‘bad’ and presents those who live in these communities as broadly responsible for the problems they experience. This mega-discourse shapes and frames policy interventions resulting in ‘inward-looking’, area-based approaches that consistently fail to challenge or address more structural issues such as socio-economic contexts, city-wide and global factors that impact on spatial inequalities (Matthews, 2010).

This pathologising, mega-discourse is reflected in a significant number of sources including local and national media, autobiographical accounts (for example, Farley and Griffiths, 2008, Hanley 2007, Roberts, 1971) and academic analysis and debates (for example, Bagguley and Mann, 1992, Bullock et al, 2001, Dixon et al, 2005, Marson, 2008, Musterd, 2008, Todd, 2008, Watt, 2006, 2008, Welshman, 1999, 2006a, 2006b, 2012) which can be historically and culturally situated across the twentieth and twenty-first century. Importantly, specific focus on certain policy prescriptions of the New Labour governments during 1997-2010 demonstrates how this narrative can be seen to manifest in New Labour policy discourses and how this narrative has been re-shaped within contemporary conditions and contexts.

### **3.3 The ‘Deserving and Undeserving’ Poor.**

The classification of those at the lower end of the socio-economic hierarchy (the ‘poor’) people into categories that distinguish, in some form, between the ‘deserving’ and the ‘underserving’ poor has a long history (see, for example, Hindle, 2004, Katz, 1993). The

focus here will be on more recent forms of categorisation that have characterised academic, political and policy discourses in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries and what this might tell us about policy discourses.

For Katz, one of the most significant scholars in this area, the ‘enduring attempt to classify the poor by merit’ has persisted for ‘centuries’ and, in part, is an outcome of the relationship between policy objectives and finite resources in which classification acts as a justification for limiting resources allocated to support those at the lower end of the socio-economic hierarchy (2013:1). Put simply these systems help policy makers justify who should and who should not get help. Katz, although focusing predominantly on the US, notes how the identity of the underserving poor varies throughout history and he notes that the terms used to describe the undeserving poor, whether based on morality, biology or culture, serve to isolate and stigmatize them. Katz notes,

The underserving poor, the culture of poverty, and the underclass are moral statuses identified by the source of dependence. The behaviour with which it is associated, its transmission to children, and its crystallisation into cultural patterns (Katz, 2013: 2).

Importantly, Katz notes that empirical evidence almost always challenges the assumptions underlying classifications of the poor and that since the 1960s research on poverty has provided an ‘arsenal’ of ammunition for critics of such classifications. And yet they persist. For Katz this is because they help identify familiar and easy targets that help to demonstrate the link between ‘virtue and success that legitimates the capitalist political economy’ whilst incentivising work, whatever the conditions and remuneration, through stigmatisation and punitive sanctions (2013:2). For Katz it is clear that these classificatory systems have a valuable political and ideological dimension that work to situate the problem

of poverty as a problem of persons, rather, for example than socio-economic or political structures. The idea of poverty, as a problem of persons, manifests in what Katz calls ‘soft’ and a ‘hard’ versions. In the soft version poverty is the result of laziness, immoral behaviour, inadequate skills and dysfunctional – although Katz argues that individual redemption is at least possible in this version. The hard version, which is much more pessimistic, views poverty as the result of inherited deficiencies that limit individual potential, trigger harmful and immoral (or anti-social) behaviour and circumscribe economic achievement. Katz’s (2013) arguments are relevant to my thesis as they foreground the historical continuities in the processes of classification, the political dimension of these processes and the lack of empirical evidence that supports these classificatory systems.

### **3.4 The ‘Underclass’.**

In not dissimilar ways Macnicol (1987) has mapped the emergence of the idea of the ‘underclass’ and the continuities between this term and others dating back to the later nineteenth century. Macnicol maintains that there has been at least six reconstructions of this broad idea listing them as: the social residuum of the 1880s, the social problem group idea of the 1930s, the concept of the problem family in the 1950s, the culture of poverty thesis of the 1960s, the cycle of deprivation theory of the 1970s and the underclass debate of the 1980s and 1990s.

The notion of the ‘underclass’ became a very potent and ubiquitous one in academic, policy and popular arenas in the 1980s and 1990s and still makes the occasional appearance as an unquestioned explanation for certain social and economic outcomes. Macnicol (1987) argues that the very ambiguity of the concept of the underclass helped explain its acceptance and popularity as a classificatory term he nevertheless identified five important characteristics attached to this concept and those it aimed to identify and define. First, he argued, it was an artificial administrative definition relating to state organisations and

individuals and as such it was a statistical artefact that could be measured through factors such as eligibility for state benefits, take-up of those benefits and changing employment and unemployment patterns. Second, the idea of the underclass was all too readily confused with the issue of inter-generational transmission of poverty. Third, the concept was characterised by loose definitional coherence and application with some behavioural traits being identified as anti-social and others ignored. Like Katz (2013), Macnicol saw this concept as very much an issue related to the distribution of (finite) resources. Finally, Macnicol also argued that the concept was readily deployed by those who wished to limit the scope of the welfare state and, as such, formed an element of the Conservative Party's analysis of the causes of social problems (1987).

Mann (1992) makes the key point that terms such as the 'underclass' are all too often descriptively vague and lack location within a coherent theory of social division. Indeed, he argues that these phrases are, in the main, a 'form of shorthand', and a way of referring briefly to a social phenomenon rather than a systematic and rigorous form of social analysis (Mann, 1992: 2). He notes that it is all too easy to slip from identifying a social group who may appear to experience social problems into the position where this group becomes 'regarded *as* the social problem' (1992: 2).

Dean and Taylor-Gooby (1992) argue that the historical repetition of these classificatory systems are most interesting for what they tell us about political and social preoccupations with dependency and that concepts such as the underclass are best understood as not ones that identify and define the marginalised but to effectively marginalise those the concept defines, offering insights into broader social relations rather than providing any form of empirically based definitional use.

What the arguments of Macnicol (1987), Mann (1992) and Dean and Taylor-Gooby (1992) all help to demonstrate is how historical continuities can be identified within the



various classificatory terms used to describe the poor and how these are often more significant at the discursive level than the empirical. They also highlight the political and economic role of these concepts and how they relate to policy areas that deal with the allocation of public welfare resources. In this way these systems work to legitimate the provision of support to some and the exclusion of others.

### **3.5 New Labour's Narrative of Community, Renewal and Social Exclusion.**

Over the last two decades the gap between those worst estates and the rest of the country has grown. It has left us with a situation that no civilised country should tolerate. It is simply not acceptable that so many children go to school hungry, or not at all, that so many teenagers grow up with no real prospect of a job and that so many pensioners are afraid to go out of their homes. It shames us as a nation, it wastes lives and we all have to pay the costs of dependency and social division.

Blair, T., 'Foreword', in SEU, (1998), *Bringing Britain Together: A National Strategy For Neighbourhood Renewal*, London, TSO.

... over the past 20 years, poverty has become more concentrated in individual neighbourhoods and estates than before, and the social exclusion of these neighbourhoods has become more marked.

Social Exclusion Unit, (2000:7).

Following the election of the New Labour Government in 1997 there followed a consistent and far-reaching attempt to pursue a set of policies aimed at dealing with issues of social and spatial inequalities in Britain's most deprived areas. These policy initiatives ranged across broad sets of activities including urban planning and development, education and training initiatives and community development and capacity building as the search for an

‘urban renaissance’ took hold (DETR, 1999; Raco and Imrie, 2003; Atkinson and Helms, 2007).

The New Labour administrations of the period 1997-2010 placed considerable emphasis on key areas for intervention and policy development which were explicitly linked to the idea of social exclusion. This included ‘community’ and its regeneration and renewal which also included a specific focus on housing estates and those that lived on them. Consequently the period of New Labour administration was characterized by a flurry of major policy initiatives and programme developments that aimed to deal with what was perceived as a ‘modern’ and intensifying problem: the social exclusion of significant numbers of the population which had, in Tony Blair’s words, a deeply ‘corrosive’ effect on society as a whole whilst also being ‘handed down from generation to generation’.

That said, this thesis does not offer a detailed evaluation of these policies or programmes. Rather, drawing on both these policies and the analysis provided by a number of scholars who have demonstrated the importance of examining the construction and use of discourses and narratives within policy in general and New Labour’s approach to community and social exclusion in particular (Collins, 1997; Fairclough, 2000, 2003; Fremeaux, 2005; Furbey, 1999; Hastings, 1998; Lees, 2004; MacLeavy, 2006; Matthews, 2010; Richardson and Jensen, 2003; Tiesdell and Allmendinger, 2001; Watt, 2000; Watt and Jacobs, 2000), this approach seeks to identify what the key assumptions are that manifest out of (or from) policy documents and prescriptions and how these policies construct and narrate the target populations they are aimed at, through an exploration of the language and discourse – both implicit and explicit – contained within these policy frameworks and programmes.

Welshman (2006) has argued that the substitution of the term social exclusion for that of the underclass in the mid-1990s represents a continuation of the classificatory approach to the poor pursued by Macnicol (1987) and others explored in the section above. Welshman

maintains that, in particular, New Labour's focus on structural causes of deprivation, the links to behavioural factors and the stress on the ways in which social exclusion were linked to intergenerational transmission demonstrate that the term social exclusion can be seen as linked to the idea of the underclass. In addition, the inclusion of the term 'cycle of deprivation' also links the New Labour notion of social exclusion to other previous categorisation processes (see SEU 2004). He suggests that the term is simply the more recent in a series of labels that stretches back over 120 years (Welshman, 2006: 183).

The analysis of policy documents and the language they adopt makes it possible to identify key themes and ideological assumptions about what was needed to be done and to whom and why. Specifically this analysis allows for an assessment of how notions of community and attitudes to specific communities are articulated within government policy and documents and examines the language through which the causes of social exclusion, degeneration and socio-economic deprivation are conceptualized, examined and explained in official narratives.

The importance of this discussion to my argument is that policy is not formed in a sealed universe and existing discourses, narratives and assumptions all act as contexts for policy development and the shape it takes. Furthermore, policies are also experienced not as separate from the everyday but they form a context for actual lives and lived experiences, as are the responses of individuals to changes and continuities in their lives and life-chances, communities and the wider world around them. So, for example, on one level some of the qualitative data presented here provides us with an insight into how individuals in a specific location respond to, experience, resist or attempt to mediate the impact of economic globalisation and industrial restructuring – in this case in the example of the rise and fall of the car manufacturing and related industries in the City of Oxford.

Analysis of policy outputs and the language they use can provide the outline of an ‘official vocabulary’ of space, place, regeneration, development and, most importantly, those who are, implicitly and explicitly, constructed through these discourses (Fairclough, 2003). As noted earlier, of central relevance to this project is how specific narratives, images and representations of particular places and those who live in them are constructed and how far the voice and views of residents (and their alternative narratives, images and representations of space, place and community) are engaged with by those with greater access to resources, power and policy decision-making. As Hoban and Beresford (2001) notes, it is not only the people’s voice that is often missing from discussions of ‘regeneration’ but also critical examination of some of the established concepts employed as part of the language of ‘regeneration’ - for example community, democracy, inclusion. Nor is it always clear who the real beneficiaries of all this policy are supposed to be or actually are (Hoban and Beresford, 2001, Diamond, 2004, Craig, 2007).

Drawing on the idea of narratives discussed above I want to suggest that we can identify a narrative within New Labour policy prescriptions and that there are three central elements to this narrative: First identifies the location of the ‘problem’ (estates), second, the cause and explanation of the problem (individual (moral) responsibility/irresponsibility) and third, the remedy (policy interventions). In this section of this chapter I look at the development of this narrative through a consideration of a number key policy documents<sup>8</sup> that emerged during the years of the New Labour administrations and how these three strands come together in the over-arching New Labour narrative to reflect a contemporary rendering of the historical narrative of the poor.

---

<sup>8</sup> See Social Exclusion Unit (1998), *Bringing Britain Together, A National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal*, London, Stationary Office, Social Exclusion Unit (2001), *A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal*, Cabinet Office, London, Social Exclusion Unit, (2000), *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal: A Framework for Consultation*, London, Cabinet Office, Social Exclusion Unit, (2001), *A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal – National Strategy Action Plan*, SEU, London, Social Exclusion Unit, (2004), *Breaking the Cycle: Taking Stock of Progress and Priorities for the Future*, London, SEU.

It is important to note that efforts to identify what is ‘wrong’ or ‘failing’ in any given community are implicitly accompanied by assumptions about what can be said to constitute an inclusive, functional and cohesive community. One of the key issues for me is how approaches to areas seen as deprived are characterised by the predominance of deficit modelling of those communities. This is not to say that there are no measurable aspects of deprivation and social exclusion or that mapping communities in this way is somehow inaccurate or unhelpful. Indeed, as chapter five demonstrates, there is considerable empirical evidence that the Leys does experience significant levels of deprivation and social exclusion as measured through for example, the Indices of Multiple Deprivation. However, it seems that the focus on ‘deficit’ can become totalising and definitional helping to erase more positive assessments or understandings of those communities. Deficit modelling also appears to be accompanied by assumptions about what sort of people live in these communities, that they are themselves lacking in various ways. The third theme is the focus on the assumed close relationship between economic regeneration - with specific reference to individual skills capacity, increased employment opportunities and the willingness to work – the control of access to (and amount of) welfare benefits and the ‘well-being’ of the community.

### **3.6 New Labour, New Community?**

As already noted the idea of community was central to many New Labour policy prescriptions and approaches that emerged during their years in government (Levitas, 1998, 2000; Tiesdell and Allmendinger, 2001; Fremeaux, 2005; Craig 2007; Johnstone and Macleod, 2011) and a number of initial developments under New Labour established the centrality of the idea of community. For example, the creation of the Social Exclusion Unit in 1997 was an important development in terms of focusing attention on New Labour’s apparent commitment to tackling the problems and difficulties faced by marginalised groups and deprived communities. The New Deal for Communities (2009b), which established a major

focus on social exclusion, concentrated deprivation and long-term unemployment, also highlighted the policy focus on communities. Furthermore, the launch of the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal which explored a number of new interventions through a range of area based initiatives across the country also focused on community as a key location for intervention and change.

In addition, government concerns about urban decline and renewal resulted in the creation of the 1999 Urban Task Force which was created to identify how best to tackle urban decline and directly influenced the composition and scope of the 2000 Urban White Paper *Our Towns and Cities: the Future - Delivering an Urban Renaissance* and launched the idea that New Labour were committed to an all-encompassing notion of an urban renaissance. This time limited group published its final report, *Towards a Strong Urban Renaissance* (2005) which aimed to identify causes of urban decline, to recommend solutions that would bring people back into cities and to establish a vision for urban regeneration based on the principles of design excellence, social well-being and environmental responsibility within a viable economic and legislative framework.

Furbey (1999) stresses the significance of the metaphorical use of the concept of regeneration; it seems to me that we should read 'regeneration' (and related policy interventions) as a complex shorthand for a variety of attempts to deal with the 'people' in various ways. Furbey's (1999) detailed historical analysis of the genesis of the term 'regeneration' through related notions of 'redevelopment', 'renewal' and 'renaissance' traces the metaphorical nature of these concepts and their symbolic importance. Despite their origins in rebirth or profound change in policy terms these concepts have become associated with processes of incremental change and renewal. In addition, Furbey highlights how these metaphors have enabled successive governments to focus on the excluded rather than the 'excluders'.

This is a very important point as it provides an important contribution to explaining how apparently positive and progressive policy prescriptions often appear to work against achieving for those they are designed to support. Indeed, notions of ‘regeneration’, ‘renewal’ and so on, although readily deployed by politicians and practitioners as if neutral or beneficent ideas and processes are, in fact, historically and socially situated, normative and, in Furbey’s reading, metaphorically and symbolically significant. Indeed, detailed review and analysis forces us to ask: is the approach to regeneration really about social progress, justice and fairness or does it represent some form of advanced method of social control and population management?

Without wishing to over-state the case we might advance the idea that regeneration is a kind of contemporary political myth in the sense that the idea and objectives contained within the narratives of regeneration policies, prescriptions and practices not only act to describe, define and delimit the urban and associated problems but also act as a kind of ‘mythic’ present or just out of reach near present. It is a kind of reification of ‘unobtainable’ places, people and behaviours, a search for symmetry and balance, in and for our communities which, based on a range of social and political ideas, beliefs and values that can only ever be unfulfilled. Even if this is to over-state it is very important, as Furbey does, to highlight and consider the role of metaphors, systems of languages, objects, signs, symbols and power within all this. (See Burke, 1989, Edleman, 1985).

MacLeavey (2006), deploying an extended critical discourse analysis of the New Labour policy prescriptions, demonstrates how the concept of social exclusion shifts from one that emphasises process (of becoming excluded) to one that focuses on the end result of being socially excluded which facilitates a social and welfare policy approach that places insufficient attention on the ‘instruments of exclusion’ (2006:96). For MacLeavey the critical issue here is that the shift is accompanied by an approach that neglects the relationships

between problems and social agents. The result, as illustrated in this quote from the Social Exclusion Unit (2003) is that analysis of the instruments of exclusion and the relationship between exclusion and social agents is replaced by a list of discrete facts.

If you live in a low-income household in childhood, you are far more likely to be unemployed or disadvantaged later in life. If your parents do not have a job, then you are more likely to have a period of unemployment. And if you grow up in a low-income household, you are more likely to become a lone parent, at a younger age - and thus to start the cycle of child poverty, low expectations, poor educational attainment and poor health again.

(SEU, 2003: 2-3).

These tendencies can be further traced in the Social Exclusion Unit's definitions of social exclusion.

Social exclusion is a shorthand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown. When such problems combine they can create a vicious circle. Social exclusion can happen as a result of problems that face one person in their life. But it can also start from birth. Being born into poverty or to parents with low skills still has a major influence on future life chances. (ODPM, 2006: 2).

Dean highlights how the concept of social exclusion acts as a '...a symbolic manifestation of socially constituted definitions of failure' arguing that the term does not



usefully define a real or tangible set of phenomenon, but does touch (in poorly defined ways) upon real and important issues, to do with work, the family and citizenship (1991: 39). Levitas's (1998) sustained analysis of the concept of social exclusion and the policies of New Labour identifies three competing discourses which inform New Labour policy prescriptions aimed at tackling social exclusion: a redistributionist discourse, a moral underclass discourse and a social integrationist discourse. So, whilst aspects of New Labour's approach contain continuities with the Labour tradition of redistributive politics and others contain an emphasis on social integration, Levitas (1998) argues that the moral underclass discourse runs throughout Labour's approach to social exclusion because this model presents "... the underclass or socially excluded as culturally distinct from the mainstream" (21). Furthermore, Levitas argues that this discourse demonstrates a gendered dimension which emphasises the idleness and criminality of young men and the welfare dependency of single mothers.

As the focus of New Labour's urban policy prescriptions fell specifically on the idea of the 'community' it is important to consider the value of this overused, complex and indistinct concept (Brent, 1997; Cohen, 1985; Hoggett, 1997, Silk, 1999; Suttles, 1972). Despite its apparent ubiquity (Hoggett, 1997) the idea of 'community' remains problematic, contested and difficult to define to the extent that the concept is seen by some as almost redundant and 'imaginary' (Amin, 2005, Anderson, 2006, Pahl, 2005, Levitas, 2000, Stacey, 1969). Nevertheless the very idea of community remains highly central to both policy-making and social organisation. It is a constant reference point for individuals and operates as an important signifier of a range of objective and subjective aspects of people's everyday life. There is then a contradiction at the very centre of this thesis in which the term 'community' has to be both repeatedly acknowledged and utilised whilst at the same time rigorously deconstructed and re-presented as imaginary, 'mythic' or 'lost' (Anderson, 2006, Williams, 1975).

Hoggett (1997) notes the increasing prominence of the idea of community in social and public policy from the late 1960s onwards along with the tendency for this term to be linked to assumptions about 'system dysfunction' (9) and he states:

... the problem of community was either seen in terms of the dysfunctional outcome of social and economic progress or in terms of dysfunctional families and social networks (Hoggett, 1997: 9).

However, Hoggett also notes that the idea of community also became seen as something the poor and economically deprived 'need' and that this idea became a central assumption of social and public policy. However, despite the apparent representation of community as an unqualified good and desirable state it is important to recognise that community is a fundamentally political concept which is saturated with power (Hoggett, 1997). Such analysis is further developed by Brent, who argues that,

Community is too often and rhetorically used as a positive and unambivalent word to weigh against the negatives of disintegration by writers and policy makers across the political spectrum, without an understanding that any formation of community brings with it a whole range of further questions, difficulties, and struggles. Community is not a term for use as an unequivocal slogan of redemption. (Brent, 1997, 82).

This not only includes defining what constitutes a 'community' and what constitutes being part of a community means but also includes disagreement over appropriate research methods and level or unit of study and what studying 'communities' can usefully tell us (if anything) about social relationships and organisation (Stacey, 1969; Crow, 1999). Nevertheless neither the complexity nor contested nature of the concept has deterred academics, politicians, popular commentators and policy makers from advocating community as a 'good' thing.

In response to increased academic and political interest in the 1990s, Silk (1999) provides a detailed theoretical review of the notions of community, place and identity in which he explores the various ways in which ‘community’ as a concept is deployed as a normative, theoretical and, crucially a ‘politicomoral’ concept (1999:5). While the concept of community remains at best, opaque, analysing the way in which the concept operates as a both a moral and normative concept in relation to policy narratives that relate to the renewal and regeneration of deprived areas does provide a useful insight. This is particularly the case given the centrality of notions of community to the New Labour project and the extent to which highly normative notions of community informed New Labour’s conception of what the ‘good’ or ‘effective’ or ‘positive’ community *should* be it becomes clearly important to examine this concept in some depth.

Fremaux (2005: 268) highlights how the idea of ‘community’ underwent a ‘rebirth’ in the 1990s as it became central to much of New Labour policy after 1997 with the government’s commitment to the ‘Third Way’. She argues that New Labour ‘rhetoric’ utilises the concept of community and ‘bottom-up’ in initiatives throughout a range of policy areas (for example the New Deal for Communities) and with the commitment to allocate funds for development and regeneration initiatives where partnerships could demonstrate genuine community involvement. However, she questions what this actually means in terms of the ideological dimensions of the concept, its paradoxical nature and the difficulties inherent in the idea of community.

As with Silk (1999), Fremaux identifies a moral dimension and strongly value-laden meaning of community in New Labour’s rhetoric associated with a nostalgia for ‘lost’ forms of social organisation. For her the influence of Etzioni (1991, 1996) is writ large across the rhetoric and policy formations of the New Labour government and can be detected in the specific policy prescriptions derived by, for example, the Social Exclusions Unit. In addition

Fremeaux draws attention to the influence of Etzioni's (1991) stress on responsibilities of the citizen to the wider community as a flip-side of possessing rights along with the role of families and wider networks in enforcing the appropriate moral order. Consequently, Fremeaux argues, the New Labour concept of community was very much a moral one that easily slipped into an authoritarian one. In addition she notes a central contradiction in New Labour rhetoric that appears to see 'community' as both the problem and the solution reflected in the objectives of tackling social exclusion through 'bottom-up' community (area) based initiatives in deprived areas. For Fremeaux this approach is hugely problematic as:

This conceptualisation of community as an efficient tool for the local organisation of government initiatives is at the heart of numerous policies in spite of many theorists having challenged both the naturalness of community solidarity and the congruence of the boundaries of place with the sense of community that people hold. (Fremeaux, 2005: 271).

The idea of community was deeply embedded in New Labour's attempts to pursue a set of policies aimed at dealing with issues of social and spatial inequalities in Britain's most deprived areas. These policy initiatives have ranged across broad sets of activities including urban planning and development, education and training initiatives and community development and capacity building. Although, as outlined above, attempts at tackling such issues have been a relatively consistent feature of post-Second World War British public policy, for some (not least the government itself) those initiatives pursued by New Labour have been depicted as distinct, innovative and progressive. One key characteristic of the New Labour approach has been to stress the importance of gaining community engagement, participation and responses to inform the direction and implementation of regeneration strategies (Social Exclusion Unit 1998, 2000, 2001 a, b; Department of Communities and

Local Government, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c and 2009a,b). Consequently, local regeneration and community development initiatives have been accompanied with a variety of forms of public consultation, engagement and participation. However, critics and community members alike have questioned the authenticity of these approaches and have repeatedly challenged local and national government to develop more effective methods of engagement which highlight the 'real' needs and aspirations of local people and allow for meaningful empowerment of residents in those localities (Hoban and Beresford, 2001, Ledwith, 2005).

The concept of 'community' and the way that it is used and deployed in such a wide variety of ways demonstrates the ways in which ideas and concepts both highlight aspects of the lived reality of individuals and the gaps that exist between and indeed characterise those very aspects themselves. Furthermore, not only does this all highlight these gaps it also throws light on the (our) ability to define or codify the everyday understandings and ideas that people – including ourselves – carry with them and deploy in seeking to make sense of the everyday. It also seems reasonably clear that – certainly in terms of lived experience – individuals hold multiple meanings and multiple interpretations of any given idea at any given time. Indeed, these multiple meanings and interpretations can be complimentary or contradictory both in terms of immediacy and over-longer time spells. What all this tells us is that working with abstract concepts, be that at the descriptive, reflective or analytical level, that also represent significant actual and desired aspects of individual and collective life is very problematic. In other words, the notion (as concept is too fixed a term) of community is both and simultaneously objective and subjective. Thus, to suggest that notions of community are both normative and anormative, objective and subjective, both imaginary and real and both empowering and restrictive – is to say very little indeed and nothing that is helpful in real terms.

In these respects it also seems to me that the case for settled, uncontentious and unified communities (as the preferred norm) is over-stated. It may be that a focus on division, on ‘becoming’ and on conflict (and how these experiences are negotiated within the community) is at least as important as a focus on the former ideas. However, such an approach may not help us greatly in trying to determine or explain the social, emotional or structural appeal of such concepts and ideas.

This study seeks to contribute to this discussion by engaging with the members of a community in East Oxford that has long been stigmatised and has also been subject to more interventions, in the guise of ‘regeneration’ initiatives, than any other area of the City of Oxford. I explore residents’ experiences and views of the needs, strengths and weaknesses of their communities and their views of ‘official’ attempts by local authorities and organisations to ‘regenerate’ their communities.

### **3.7 Bringing Britain Together, Neighbourhood Renewal and Respect: New Labour’s Narrative of the ‘problem’.**

*Bringing Britain Together: A National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal* (SEU, 1998) can be seen to act as a kind of ‘foundational document’ both in terms of New Labour’s conceptualisations of communities and also as a frame for further policy development over time. The importance of the contribution of politicians and senior government officials is a clear example of those ‘who are (apparently) warranted to identify and classify actions and behaviours as problematic’ (Valentine and Fraser, 2008) and the importance of their location within the ‘hierarchy of credibility’ (Becker, 1967).

Matthews acknowledges that to some extent New Labour’s approach to urban policy (as highlighted in for example, *Bringing Britain Together: A National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal* (SEU, 1998) and *A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal* (SEU, 2001)) demonstrated a recognition of the need for more outward-looking, public-sector

led approaches which operated at city-wide levels (for example in the creation of Local Strategic Partnerships) to challenge spatial inequalities. However, he also maintains that the persistence of the mega-discourse of spatial pathology reinforces the conception of ‘bad areas’ inhabited by ‘problem people’ who are largely responsible for the inequalities they experience.

However, a number of commentators have noted how the discourses of New Labour governments, even when ostensibly designing policy that might be seen as inclusive and progressive have a tendency to perpetuate what Matthews identifies as a ‘mega-discourse’ of pathologisation (2010:222). Matthews detects a persistence of pathological discourses in urban regeneration policy that not only characterises New Labour but can be traced back for at least forty years in UK regeneration policy. Drawing on Stone (1989) he notes that the critical importance of these discourses, characterised as they are by notions of ‘bad’ communities, is that they work to blame communities for the problems they face and also frame the policy interventions that then follow. The outcome of this, in policy terms, are ‘inward-looking area based initiatives’ that focus on highly localised interventions (the construction and operation of community centres, community development projects or local employment initiatives) that are of limited effect in countering the global socio-economic factors that lead to spatial economic and social inequalities in British cities (Matthews, 2010:222 but also see Taylor et al, 1996, Carley et al., 2000).

For Johnston and Mooney (2007) in many of New Labour’s policy prescriptions the ‘council estate’ was often counter-poised against the New Labour vision of a revivalist urban citizenship. Thus for Johnston and Mooney the construction and representation of council estates as ‘problem’ places, places and areas that pose a problem for and to the local and national state, for agencies engaged in the delivery of criminal justice and a diverse range of services to a ‘welfare’ dependent population represent a confirmation that the ‘council estate’

plays a symbolically and ideologically important signifier as a persistent marker of social problems and ‘spatialized dysfunctionality’ (Johnston and Mooney, 2007: 127) which is reflected throughout New Labour policies and programmes throughout the period 1997-2010.

So, the importance of the policies and of the language employed to construct them by the New Labour governments is that it acted as both a way of thinking about and defining the ‘problem’ (as well as the solution) and those ‘responsible’ for the problem as well as a way of curtailing and qualifying the reach of policies and political action and excuses what in other times might be seen as political failure. Echoing Furbey (1999) we can also see how there is much more than the application of policy bound up in approaches to urban regeneration and renewal and those communities who are to be ‘regenerated’. Indeed, these policy prescriptions not only form part of that policy discourse continuity but can be more widely located in the generally pathologising discourses that characterise official and popular treatments of the poor and where they live. In a sense, policy discourse becomes yet another manifestation of a hegemonic discourse. Imrie and Raco (2003), in discussing New Labour’s approach to the creation of an ‘urban renaissance’, argue that the overall approach of New Labour resulted in the creation of a ‘degenerate policy culture’ (2003: 6) premised on ‘entrenched stereotypes’ (2003: 25) which worked to stratify the population into ‘deserving’ and ‘underserving’ recipients of social and welfare interventions; in short the poor are a problem because they are dependent and deviant (2003: 25). The analysis of the qualitative data in Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight seeks to explore how closely New Labour’s idea(s) of and about community can be mapped onto the views and experiences of those who were the centre of the attention of much social and public policy during the period 1997 to 2010.

### **3.8 Taking Stock: New Labour’s Policy Approach 1997-2010.**



The interview data on which this main empirical element of this thesis is based were gathered during fieldwork undertaken in 2010-11 during the last months of the New Labour administrations and the beginning of the Coalition government of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Parties which formed the government after the May 2010 General Election. In this section I present a review and analysis of New Labour policy approaches over the period 1997-2010, the nature of urban policy during the Coalition Government administration of 2010-2015 and the emerging policy approach of the Conservative Governments elected in 2015 and 2017. I seek to demonstrate that the policy context which has emerged since the empirical data was gathered demonstrates the persistence – and to some extent a worsening – of the prevailing political and policy contexts that residents of territorial stigmatised areas live out their everyday lives and how the data analysis remains relevant in current and ongoing political and policy contexts.

Wilks-Heeg (2016) suggests that the New Labour election victory of 1997 heralded a fifth distinctive phase of urban policy since 1945. Informed by notions of the ‘third way’, New Labour’s approach to urban policy professed a commitment to the ‘objective of tackling social exclusion through a renewed emphasis on community-based solutions at the neighbourhood level’ (Wilks-Heeg, 2016:13). Lupton et al maintain that neighbourhood-level interventions to ‘equalise living conditions and opportunities’ were a ‘hallmark’ of the New Labour administrations of 1997-2010 and highlight the Social Exclusion Unit’s stated intention that ‘within 10 to 20 years no one should be seriously disadvantaged by where they live’ (2016: 311). In these policy prescriptions considerable emphasis was placed on community engagement and community led approaches to urban regeneration and related policy areas. This was most notably reflected in the New Deal for Communities Programme (Henderson, 2012; Lupton, et al., 2016; Wilks-Heeg 2016) although the expectation that communities would be more involved in policy design and implementation was reinforced in

other policy prescriptions such as *Communities in Control: Real People, Real Power* (DCLG, 2008b) and *Transforming Places: Changing Lives – A Framework for Regeneration* (DCLG, 2008c).

However, a number of commentators have noted how the discourses of New Labour governments, even when ostensibly designing policy that might be seen as inclusive and progressive have a tendency to perpetuate what Matthews identifies as a ‘mega-discourse’ of pathologisation (2010:222). Matthews detects a persistence of pathological discourses in urban regeneration policy that not only characterises New Labour but can be traced back for at least forty years in UK regeneration policy. Drawing on Stone (1989) he notes that the critical importance of these discourses, characterised as they are by notions of ‘bad’ communities, is that they work to blame communities for the problems they face and also frame the policy interventions that then follow. The outcome of this, in policy terms, are ‘inward-looking area based initiatives’ that focus on highly localised interventions (the construction and operation of community centres, community development projects or local employment initiatives) that are of limited effect in countering the global socio-economic factors that lead to spatial economic and social inequalities in British cities (Matthews, 2010:222 but also see Taylor et al, 1996, Carley et al., 2000).

For Johnston and Mooney (2007) in many of New Labour’s policy prescriptions the ‘council estate’ was often counter-poised against the New Labour vision of a revivalist urban citizenship. Thus for Johnston and Mooney the construction and representation of council estates as ‘problem’ places, places and areas that pose a problem for and to the local and national state, for agencies engaged in the delivery of criminal justice and a diverse range of services to a ‘welfare’ dependent population represent a confirmation that the ‘council estate’ plays a symbolically and ideologically important signifier as a persistent marker of social problems and ‘spatialised dysfunctionality’ (Johnston and Mooney, 2007: 127) which is

reflected throughout New Labour policies and programmes throughout the period 1997-2010.

So, the importance of the policies and of the language employed to construct them by the New Labour governments is that it acted as both a way of thinking about and defining the ‘problem’ (as well as the solution) and those ‘responsible’ for the problem as well as a way of curtailing and qualifying the reach of policies and political action and excuses what in other times might be seen as political failure. Echoing Furbey (1999) we can also see how there is much more than the application of policy bound up in approaches to urban regeneration and renewal and those communities who are to be ‘regenerated’. Indeed, these policy prescriptions not only form part of that policy discourse continuity but can be more widely located in the generally pathologising discourses that characterise official and popular treatments of the poor and where they live. In a sense, policy discourse becomes yet another manifestation of a hegemonic discourse. Imrie and Raco (2003), in discussing New Labour’s approach to the creation of an ‘urban renaissance’, argue that the overall approach of New Labour resulted in the creation of a ‘degenerate policy culture’ (2003: 6) premised on ‘entrenched stereotypes’ (2003: 25) which worked to stratify the population into ‘deserving’ and ‘underserving’ recipients of social and welfare interventions; in short the poor are a problem because they are dependent and deviant (2003: 25). My data analysis in Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight seeks to explore how closely New Labour’s idea(s) of and about community can be mapped onto the views and experiences of those who were at the centre of the attention of much social and public policy during the period 1997 to 2010.

Furthermore, as Wilks-Heeg (2016) notes despite the sheer number of urban policy interventions and the claims made for them by New Labour during their period in office financial commitment to this policy area, in terms of public expenditure, was highly limited.

For Tyler (2013) New Labour policy approach was crucially flawed in a number of important ways that worked to limit the effective engagement with communities and the

development of progressive policy outcomes. Although New Labour appeared to offer a vision of a meritocratic society founded on market-driven egalitarianism that would result in a 'classless' society Tyler argues that this neoliberal vision was itself a class project (2013:7). Tyler develops a 'thick social and cultural account of neoliberalism as a form of governance' and argues that New Labour's approach relied on the creation of the figure of the 'national abject' and to secure internal border zones (for example areas of territorial stigmatisation) to facilitate the channeling of public anxieties and hostilities towards groups who are imagined to be a parasitical drain and threat to scarce resources (2013: 5-9). Tyler argues that the decoupling of economic equalities from the conceptual and political language of class work to reconfigure the perceptual framework through which social and economic disadvantage is perceived. Through this process a new era of class relations emerged in which the 'council estate' came to mark the moral boundaries of the nation-state (2016: 160). Although Tyler notes that the process of pathologising of the 'council estate' had commenced during the Thatcher governments of the 1980s she argues that it was under New Labour that 'a powerful consensus emerged' that council estates were abject border zones within the state 'that were not only liminal with regard to wider social norms and values but were actively antisocial spaces' (2016:160). In this reading the council estate became shorthand for a new class of problem places where the poverty associated with these areas became imagined as a self-induced pathological condition. She argues:

The moral panic about council estates unleashed pervasive forms of territorial stigmatisation, a revolting class discourse that was inscribed on the bodies of those who *lived* in these objectified zones (Tyler 2016:162).

For Tyler the discourses that emerged around council estates and those who lived there

epitomised in the ‘Chav’ phenomenon and fictional manifestations of this figure on the form of the character Vicky Pollard from *Little Britain* heightened and reinforced class divides and legitimated the pleasure of hatred (See also Hanley 2007). The mainstream fascination for the lives of those excluded and marginalised in contemporary Britain has also been fed by the growth of ‘factual/reality television’ (for example *How the Other Half Lives*, *Benefits Street*, both Channel 4, *Can’t Pay Take We’ll Take It Away*, Channel 5) showing that focus on representations of poverty that have heightened the visual stigmatisation of poor households and communities (Tyler 2008; Tyler and Bennett 2010).

What makes Tyler’s (2013) contribution so significant is the emphasis she places on the role of and the processes of naming and how these work to both (re)construct negative and damaging representations of people and communities and how this process can be employed to examine how and why the apparently progressive approaches of aspects of New Labour’s approach to social exclusion and disadvantage resulted in increased divisions rather than the reverse. The issue of naming and the ways in which communities and residents are framed features repeatedly in the analysis presented and discussed in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight along with the impact this has on people’s lives and day-to-day experiences.

### **3.9 ‘Broken Britain’ and ‘The Big Society’: The Coalition Government 2010-2015 and Beyond.**

The Coalition Government that came to power in 2010 witnessed the beginning of a significantly different era of urban policy; what O’Brien and Matthews (2016b) have termed a ‘post-regeneration’ era where urban policy is seemingly all but non-existent and is characterised by demands from the state that ‘communities deal with urban problems themselves’ (2016b: 199). In stated response to the financial crisis which began in 2008 the Coalition government embarked on an extensive range of public spending cuts ostensibly

aimed at cutting the budget deficit and rebalancing the UK's public accounts. These effects of these cuts have been especially hard on those reliant on welfare benefits and state support who are in low-income employment or unemployed (Bochel and Powell 2016). Ellison has argued this downward pressure on in-work and out-of work benefits has:

....caused hardship for the most deprived and marginal sections of the UK population, including children and disabled people, and those of working age who are both in and out of paid employment. 'Austerity' and 'deficit reduction' have been ideological tools, deployed as policy rationales, to effect far-reaching disaggregating changes in spending patterns (2016: 45).

The extensive cuts to public spending and the resulting closures of key social interventions and programmes – for example Children's and Sure Start Centres – has been accompanied by a further set of naming and discursive practices which continue the processes outlined by Tyler (2013) in relation to New Labour's approach of the aspects of urban and social policy. The Conservative Party had introduced the notion of 'Broken Britain' as a shorthand term to capture what it saw as the problems facing Britain (Slater 2012, Dillon and Fanning 2015). The Coalition Government identified the solution to these problems as the creation of a 'Big Society' that would rejuvenate civic and social life through the activities not of government but through the activities of voluntary, charity and community organisations and activities (Evans 2011; Bochel and Powell 2016; O'Brien and Matthews 2016).

However, numerous critics have argued that the Coalition's discourses about poverty (along with the ideological uses of austerity) have not only continued to demonize recipients of state benefits and legitimate punitive cuts in public spending but have obscured more detailed and critical examinations of structural and political aspects of 'austerity' and the

impacts of government policy (Dillon and Fanning 2015; Jensen and Tyler 2015; Pantazis 2016; Pemberton, et al. 2016).

Since the outcome of the EU Referendum in June 2016 the government and media focus has been dominated by BREXIT and related issues hastening even further the apparent retreat from urban policy and regeneration interventions. However, the government continues to utilise anti-welfare discourses, propose and enact deep cuts in social and welfare support and contribute to the reinforcement of stigmatypes (Wray 2006) and ‘othering’ of those at the lower end of the economic continuum.

### **3.10 Conclusion: From *Lumpenproletariat* to ‘chavs’ via the underclass.**

In this section I have explored dominant political readings of ‘the poor’ and how these have been constructed, defined and discussed in academic and policy discourses. What links this chapter to Chapter Two is that they both reflect the importance of how certain groups are consistently constructed, badged, named and rendered open to increased state definition, surveillance and control across both time and space. There are, of course, continuities and discontinuities in this process of construction, badging and naming which overlap and reinforce each other over time and these have to be acknowledged and explored in order to tease out their inner workings.

The retreat from the political and economic consensus that led to the creation of the welfare state and a raft of progressive social policies has been accompanied (necessarily) by a redefinition of both social groups (or social classes) and the associated central issues of social and economic experience. Those ‘left behind’ by the rise of the post-industrial, neo-liberal economy and its attendant social and political formations have had to be redefined as ‘problematic’, as ‘failures’ in and of themselves (Taylor, 1996 et al). They fail to adapt to the new requirements of the economic reality, they fail to adapt to new social and economic organisation and they fail to acquire the skills, attitudes and values that would prepare them

to secure employment within Britain's new globalised economies (Tyler, 2013). Politically, they have to be redefined and ultimately blamed for the positions they find themselves in otherwise the basic narrative of 'cause and effect' would become too complex, too far-reaching and too problematic for the dominant narrative of the globalised, neo-liberal, free-market economy and all that comes with it. Those with political power, responsibility and, notionally at least, accountability would be placed in positions that might require the suggestion of different and more socially just and equitable solutions for those 'left behind'.

And just as those people (who were once the working-classes) are redefined, so the structural factors and understanding of the realities of economic inequalities are also redefined as the persistence of these would also challenge the foundations of legitimacy of the 'new' economic order. What the idea of 'social exclusion' also achieves is the diffusion of the idea that any form of economic, social and cultural redistribution of resources can be a direct foundation for social justice. Rather the emphasis is placed on ensuring that the 'excluded' can find their own means of becoming included within the new economy and reap the benefits of this economic order in the same ways as those who already do. If they do not, cannot or will not then clearly they and they alone have failed.

It is also interesting to consider the balance of the location of responsibility and blame within these discourses. The post-industrial economic restructuring of the last thirty years, and the subsequent social, economic and political fall-out, has been discursively constructed as the outcome of inevitable, unavoidable and irresistible forces (of globalisation, of the market, of modernity and so on) and governments are powerless to act or intervene (in any meaningful way). But, ironically, those who might be seen to have felt the fullest impact of these developments, of these inevitable forces are deemed almost entirely culpable for not finding their own individual and collective solutions to the conditions they find themselves.

At one level the analysis reported here demonstrates not only the persistence and



power of ‘negative’ events on images of particular spaces and, specifically on social housing estates but also it demonstrates the importance of the micro politics of the existence of multiple and conflicting meanings and memories of particular events and how these can serve multiple purposes.

The interpretation of these areas is manifold, consisting, as we have seen, of personal narratives, official discourses and measurements, cultural valuations and social metaphors located in the historical context of each specific area. Often, these narratives take the form of dystopic visions in which all is lost for those who live there now and will live there in the future. Resident populations and the areas they live in are pathologised and are seen as wholly or at least mainly responsible, in and of themselves, for the negative conditions and outcomes they experience. They are either unable or, a more likely interpretation, unwilling to adapt to new social and economic circumstances; witting or unwitting members of the ‘underclass’.

For others, individuals living in areas of social housing are the victims of a morally and culturally inspired crusade of the middle classes. Thus, residents are discursively constructed as an ‘other’ whose moral and social failings and fragility leave them abandoned in the ‘wastelands’ of old council estates as poor reputations develop into full blown territorial stigmatisation. For others, structural factors, such as long-term economic decline and the collapse of large-scale, locally based manufacturing, have, when combined with other aspects of contemporary society, led to the creation of elements of territorial stigmatisation, denigrated neighbourhoods or old style ‘no go’ areas. Still others stress the complex interplay of social, economic and political processes which come together and find expression in concepts such as ‘area effects’ and so on. A discourse that sometimes appears to suggest that unfortunate outcomes arise, almost ‘naturally’ from the immediate environment and geography of the spaces researched.

Taken to extremes these dystopic visions of the current and future conditions of the poor and where they live appear to take the form of an exotic voyeurism of the professional middle-classes and political elites who are both ill-informed and searching for a location to practice their skills of social and economic redemption. These narratives become part of the discourses that reinforce, indeed solidify, the very social problems they seek to militate against. As the logic of the neo-liberal, post-industrial economy plays out and infiltrates all aspects of social life, as societies become more stratified around high and low incomes, these narratives work to negate resistance, human qualities and potentialities before they even have chance to take a first breath. Indeed, it is almost a form of ideological ‘carpet-bombing’ to soften up the targeted areas for an on-going and permanent exclusion of the residual poor.

## **Chapter Four            Method.**

### **4.1     Introduction.**

What research methods a researcher selects, how they use them and how they then analyse and construct their findings is a critical element of any research project and academic analysis of research methods has become a major element of the disciplines of social sciences themselves (Gerring, 2001; Bechhofer and Paterson, 2000). If research methods were once, perhaps, more stable under the powerful influence of positivism they are now much more pluralized, fragmented and contested. Commentators have increasingly focused on the implicit and explicit political dimensions of the selection, use and data interpretation that researchers reflect in their studies (Hammersley, 1995) and some argue that research is inherently political (Law, 2004). Others have argued that the very role of research and its centrality to the academic model of social science is in decline as a consequence of the ideological and institutional challenges universities have face from neo-liberalism and the marketisation of the university sector (Hammersley, 2011). Set within these discursive contexts against which all researchers must assess their own work is the equally important question of how researchers select their methods in practice and how they negotiate and understand the utility of the method and research design they choose in terms of criteria such as causal explanation, reliability, dependability and transferability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Lincoln 1995; Lincoln and Guba, 2003; Hammersley, 2014). In this chapter I examine my own choice of methods and research design and explore the strengths and limitations of my work. I will outline the methods chosen and the reason for their selection, sample size and composition, the choice of location for the fieldwork, the process of data analysis and the ethical dimension of my work. Furthermore, I will also examine the political dimension of the work, my relationship as a researcher to the subject, the location and my participants and my

position as a 'professional' researcher with institutional claims to expert and specialist knowledge.

Although the interview data collected through the qualitative, semi-structured interviews is a central part of this thesis it is important to note that there were a number of other dimensions to this research which provide an analytical context for that interview data. The interview data presented here is embedded in the analysis of the policy documents and discourses (Chapter Three) and my own extensive experience of working on the estate and with residents and organisations who are based there.

#### **4.1 Constructivism, Interactionism and Qualitative Research.**

Methods are mere instruments designed to identify and analyse the obdurate nature of the empirical world, and as such their value exists only in their suitability in enabling this task to be done.

Blumer, (1969: 27).

My study is located within a constructivist paradigm as it involves understanding the complexity of how people make sense of their lives (Crotty 1998). Qualitative methods are traditionally associated with constructivism (Atkinson and Silverman, 1997, Silverman, 1997, Denzin and Lincoln, 2003, Mason, 1996) and here I use in-depth, semi-structured interviews with residents from the Leys. As Denzin and Lincoln argue, qualitative methods allow us to '...study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (1995: 16). The theoretical approach I use here is interactionism as, following Blumer (1966) I attempt to understand the meanings social actions and interactions have for people and I am clearly interested in subjectivities, discourses and constructions of meaning and the complex interplay of these phenomena (Atkinson and Housley, 2003; Blumer 1998). I was interested in looking for and at

‘discourses’ and what sorts of things were going on, what kind of things were happening and, indeed have happened, and how residents spoke about, understood and gave meaning to their experiences of everyday life within this specific community – in its broadest sense – hence the methods chosen for this study (Devault, 1990).

This is of critical importance to this study as I wish to examine the ways in which residents express and discuss their own experiences and views of their community, its needs and the ways in which they feel outsiders tend to approach and characterise the estate and the impact they see this as having for them. Clearly there is an enormous literature to draw on here for an examination of method and a discussion of methodologies – I intend to draw on a comprehensive range of materials. In particular I will draw on Denzin and Lincoln’s *Handbook of Qualitative Research* and a selection of qualitative research texts (For example, Fontana and Frey, 1994; Becker, 1998; Charmaz, 2006; Lofland and Lofland, 1995; Silverman, 1997a, 1997b, Fontana and Frey, 2003).

My interest in the research questions and the focus of this project stems from two main concerns which have arisen directly from my involvement in community projects, activities and organisations, often in areas (both geographically and of policy) characterised as ‘deprived’ or in need of ‘regeneration.’<sup>9</sup> First, over the last twenty years I have been involved in a number of projects aimed at ‘improving’ social conditions and the ‘quality of life’ through increasing inclusion, tackling social issues and problems (for example, crime, drug-use, domestic violence, homelessness) and have often found myself working in some way or other in those communities seen, in official and popular discourses, as the most

---

<sup>9</sup> See for example, Steering Group Member – Blackbird Leys Communities Against Drugs Project (CAD), Home Office funded community development initiative, April 2002-2005, Partnership Board Member, Leys Linx, SRB-5, Oxford, 2002 – 2004, current member of the Oxford Strategic Partnership Sub Group on Health and Social Inclusion, Founding Trustee and Director, Community, Action, Development Ltd., Trustee and Director Substance Misuse Arrest Referral Team, (SMART CJS), Oxford, Trustee (Chair) and Director, Oxfordshire User Team, (OUT), Steering Group Member - Health Provision for Ethnic Minorities funded by the NHS and organised by the Oxfordshire Bangladeshi Association in partnership with East Oxford Action, 2003-2005, Steering Group Member – Blackbird Leys Communities Against Drugs Project (CAD), Home Office funded community development initiative, April 2002-2005, Steering Group member, Regeneration Framework Oxford City, 2009-present.

deprived, problematic and ‘in need’. However, while this is a constant sense of ‘these places’ (and these communities do experience many of the issues referred to) the way they are constructed, discussed and represented – it has not been my experience of such communities, neighbourhoods and the people who live in them. Second, and in a broader context, I am fascinated by the wider political and social processes at work here that appear to contribute to the construction and reinforcement of the ideas of ‘problem people’ and ‘problem places’ (Johnston and Mooney, 2007). In exploring these issues and gauging what might be happening in these communities I have opted to employ in-depth, qualitative, semi-structured interviews as my principal research method. This method has been adopted to maximise the richness and depth of data generation enabling a thorough understanding of how people make sense of their life experiences (Chamaz, 2006).

As noted in the introduction above in recent years there has been considerable discussion of what use and value sociological research has both in terms of economic and policy utility and in terms of the discipline’s intellectual and research capabilities (Law 2004, Hammersley, 1995, 2011, 2014). For example, Urry (2003), has argued that current social phenomena, especially in relation to the impact of globalisation, are so complex as to have out-run the capacity the social sciences have to meaningfully investigate them. In the face of this sort of argument others have called for a reinvigoration of the engagement sociology has with the social world (Back, 2007). For Bauman (1987), sociology should strive to embrace an approach to the social world that offers a commitment to interpretation without legislation. More recently, Back (2007) has argued for a sociology that pays more attention to the fragments of the everyday and one that admits the voices and stories of those not normally heard and to ‘... pay them the courtesy of serious attention’ (2007:11). I am very much of the view that one important role for the social science researcher is to do exactly that: pay serious attention to those less heard. This clearly adds a specifically political dimension to my work.

I hope that my own reflexivity and critical reflection on my work ensures that this political dimension remains one that can be characterised by a small ‘p’ and not one of overtly partisan, ideological commitment (Hammersley, 1995). In this sense I have decided, as Becker challenged us to, (1967) choose which side I am on. But, if I have done this ‘as personal and political commitments dictate’ I have tried to:

... use our theoretical and technical resources to avoid distortions that might introduce into our work, limit our conclusions and recognize the hierarchy of credibility for what it is... (Becker, 1967: 247).

#### **4.3 Locating the Study: Context and Choice of Fieldwork Site.**

Approaching the topic under discussion as I have, facilitates the analysis of some of the central ideas and concerns of the sociology of specific localities and spaces – in this case notions of community. Furthermore, I wanted to critically examine how what might be called macro-sociological approaches to social life (by this I mean phenomena such as globalisation, post-Fordism, transnationalism, cosmopolitanism) which have, in some readings, come to dominate the discipline, are narrated and experienced at the micro-level and, in turn, what such empirical study (at that level) can tell us about macro-sociological theorising and analysis (Crow, 1999). I want to examine the argument that all macro-sociologically significant developments take place or at least are enacted within specific localities and are made – to some extent – ‘real’ at the micro-level within those very localities. If not real, as such, then experienced as actual events, as consequences, as outcomes. Consequently, examination of the relationships between macro-sociological trends and micro-sociological experiences of individuals is critical. This, of course, is not to suggest any form of causal hierarchy here - indeed far from it - but that I would argue that sociological research needs to

take account of and be able to account for (as far as possible) both top-down and bottom-up narratives, discourses and experiences.

One of the macro-sociological factors I wanted to examine (as will have already become clear) is the notions of 'advanced marginality' and 'territorial stigmatisation' most readily associated with the work of Wacquant (1993, 1996, 2007, 2008a,b,c) as discussed in chapter two. I wanted to identify a location for fieldwork that would allow me to explore the degree to which this phenomena could be mapped through the discourses of 'outsiders' and the views on to an identifiable community which I was both familiar with and one I knew to be stigmatised to some extent by policy makers, the media and non-residents. Furthermore, I wanted to be able to explore what people who actually lived in that community felt about both this stigmatisation and the degree to which this construction overlapped with their own views and experiences of living on the estate. The most readily accessible location for the fieldwork for me was the large, peripheral housing estate on the east of Oxford made up of Blackbird and Greater Leys or as it is known more generally: The Leys. This site seemed the most appropriate because of my own experience of working on the estate, the experiences I have had working with statutory partners in this part of the city (predominantly around various regeneration projects) and the way in which the area has been constructed and represented in popular, political and official discourses since its original construction. On a more structural level the area possessed some of the characteristics Wacquant identifies as significant in relation to his concepts of 'advanced marginality' and 'territorial stigmatisation'. This includes the decline of traditional, large-scale industrial production (in this case car manufacturing), the existence of a bounded and relatively isolated community and the loss or absence of an alternative or compensatory 'hinterland'.

Having worked as a social researcher on a number of projects for local and national statutory and government agencies for several years I have often worked on what are often



popularly termed ‘social problems’ which have included homelessness, substance and alcohol misuse, crime and anti-social behaviour, health inequalities, sex work, social exclusion and deprivation. Almost invariably these projects have ended up focusing on particular geographical areas, specific localities and parts of certain towns and cities. In those towns and cities I have worked in across the UK there have tended to be persistent patterns and practices (from outside my own research practice) that have shaped and constrained my work. These areas were often presented to me by statutory and agency colleagues as in some ways or others as holding the ‘key’ to all or at least the worst of the problems under investigation.

Importantly, there are a number of key ways in which official constructions of specific localities are constructed and depicted. To some degree this is accomplished through the ways in which particular social phenomena (for example, educational attainment, health outcomes, experiences of crime and anti-social behaviour, income, mortality rates, rates of teenage pregnancy, family structure and employment rates) are measured, recorded and reported in state and local agency processes. These official constructions often rely heavily on the significant weight of data available to and collated for national and local purposes. This includes, for example, the Multiple Index of Deprivation, the Child Well-Being Index, NHS health data and crime and disorder data. Furthermore, these data collections and demographic profiles exist at different levels, from the macro-transnational data sets collected by, for example the European Union or the OECD right down to the level of Single Output Areas (SOAs), subsets of these SOAs and families and individuals. But what does this data and the mapping of people and places in this way really tell us and what does the assembling of such relentless and diverse data linked directly to specific localities and those who live there really tell us? What are the implications for those who live there and those who live somewhere else? How does the modelling of neighbourhoods in this way affect policy development, implementation and outcomes? My central argument here is that it is less

important whether or not such data is accurate, valid or interpreted or deployed correctly but that it is more important to draw attention to the ways in which such data contributes too and maps onto other representations of localities and spaces both in generic and specific cases (see for example, O'Connell Davidson and Layder 1994).

As my research has progressed I have found that my original emphasis was too weighted to the policy aspects of New Labour administrations and not focused enough on the voices of my participants. In some ways I wanted to engage with Smith (2005) and others' observations that a great deal of analysis of issues related to regeneration tend towards a focus on 'top-down' initiatives rather than the voices of those who are often subject to policy interventions. Initial analysis of my interview data suggested to me that I was missing the point and importance of my participants' contributions if I did not focus more directly on their experiences. Consequently, during the course of my research I have altered the emphasis of the thesis away from a direct focus on the policy prescriptions of New Labour and the administration's focus on regeneration onto a greater focus on the notion of 'neighbourhood'. In doing this I have decided to foreground the narrative and experiences of my participants – to pay them far greater serious attention in Back's terms (2007) – to focus on the deep, rich data and what it can tell us about how individuals and groups interact with and make sense of their everyday lives and how they respond to macro-forces that directly and indirectly shape their lives and environments they live in.

This shift in emphasis leaves the role of policy discussions highly relevant but in different ways to how I originally conceived of it. Taking a slightly longer historical perspective and analysis draws on the discourse of policy documents to illustrate how central the notion of neighbourhood has become to policy and urban management discussions. In addition, the shift in emphasis also facilitates analysis on other key sources of discourses, images and representations which includes printed media and academic and quasi-academic

treatments of both the notion of neighbourhood (Day, 2006, Lynsey, 2007, Robertson, et al, 2008) and, in this case, the specific neighbourhoods of Blackbird and Greater Leys, East Oxford (Campbell, 1993, Harvey and Hayter, 1993, Lavery, 1997, McGuigan, 1996).

There is one further consideration that is relevant here and that was the decision of whether to anonymise the locality itself. Place anonymisation is a technique that has been employed across a large number of studies located in specific places throughout the history of sociological inquiry (Nespor, 2000). A number of other studies I refer to in this thesis employ this approach from Reynolds use of 'Omega' (1986), through Kelaher et al's., 'Birdville' (2010) and Smith's anonymizing of the London estate in his 2005 study or Blokland (2008) who refers only vaguely to an inner-city neighbourhood. Nespor (2000), notes that this approach has often been deployed by researchers without justification or reflection and operates as an assumed guarantor of further anonymity for participants. However, Nespor (2000) also notes that using this technique does not, in reality, anonymise the locality in which the research is conducted as the area may well be recognizable to others despite the adoption of a pseudonym and that researchers are often inconsistent in maintaining the anonymity of place. Other studies I refer to in this thesis do not anonymise the localities in which their studies take place. This includes, for example, Barke and Turnbull's (1992) study of Meadowell, Charlesworth's (2000) study located in Rotherham, Rogaly and Taylor's (2011) study of the Larkman, North Earlham and Marlpit estates in Norwich and McKenzie's (2013, 2015) study of St. Anns estate, Nottingham (amongst others). As with these other studies I felt that the identity of the locality was important for four main reasons. The first is the specific history and political economy of the area in relation to the decline of car manufacturing and its impact on the Leys and its residents. Second, is the striking comparison between public assumptions about Oxford as a whole and the Leys. Third is the historically

situated narrative that has been constructed locally, nationally and even internationally about the Leys which forms an important context for aspects of my research. Finally, in terms of preserving the anonymity of the participants (who have themselves been anonymised) I felt that the size of the population of the estates (nearly 14,000) and the size of the sample (20) makes identification of individual participants no more likely because the location is identified than it would be if the name of the area had been withheld or replaced by a pseudonym (see also Warr, 2005).

#### **4.4 The Choice and Use of Interviews in Qualitative Research.**

‘... we should say, what is as obvious as it is important, that for the most part we can only report what people say they do, which is not necessarily the same as what they actually do.’ (Young and Willmott, 2007 [1957], xxvii)

In seeking to define qualitative research Denzin (2003) identifies seven chronological moments in the history of this approach to research: the traditional (1900-1950), the modernist (1950-1970), blurred genres (1970-1986), the crisis of representation (1986-1990), the postmodern (1990-1995), postexperimental inquiry (1995-2000) and the future (2000 - now). My study draws its inspiration from the third of these moments that of ‘blurred genres’. It is informed by the work of Clifford Geertz, who argued that the old functional, positivist, behavioural totalising approaches in the social sciences were being replaced by more pluralistic, interpretive and open-ended perspective. By calling on researchers to provide ‘thick descriptions’ of social phenomena Geertz stressed the role of researcher as an interpreter of interpretations arguing that the research text represents interpretations of interpretations (rather than objective descriptions of reality) (see Denzin, 2003, 24-25). For Denzin (2003), amongst others, the issue now becomes the author’s presence in the

interpretative text and the authority of the researcher in an age without any firm rules regarding the text, its standards of evaluation and its subject matter. Importantly, as Denzin (2003) notes, the blurred genres approach, emphasising as it does an interpretative approach, is closely associated with the theoretical approaches of constructivism and interaction which underpin my selection of methods of in-depth, semi-structured interviews.

However, the use of this method is not without criticism and although in-depth interviews have been widely used in qualitative research (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996; Denzin, 2003; Seale, 1999; Silverman, 1997, 2001) there remain considerable debates, and sometimes controversy, about their use. This method has been seen as overused becoming the position of the default method within qualitative research that is not sufficiently interrogated as to its appropriateness and utility. There has also been strong criticism from some academics who talk about endless, 'Oprah style' interviews that contribute little to existing knowledge (Silverman in Gergen and Gergen, 2000, Atkinson and Silverman, 1997). Atkinson and Silverman also argue that the use of interviews can give researchers a spurious sense of the authenticity, stability and security of their data as the direct contact with participants and the amount of data frequently generated by such interviews can create a sense of authenticity that is uncritically presented by the researcher. Furthermore, there can be an uncritical or even unacknowledged adoption of the use of interviewing without consideration of the differing power between the researcher and researched, not least because the former hold the 'monopoly of interpretation' (Kvale, 2006). Others have questioned the validity of interviews as providing a "window" on to a world, claiming that interview data, despite efforts to minimise bias, can only provide a valid picture of what occurs in interviews (Sacks, 1992). The interviewer's aim is to elicit a range of interpretative practices in the expectation that these will more accurately map the interpretative practices used outside the research interview (Potter and Mulkey, 1985).

Although I am fully aware of the limitations of the use of in-depth, semi-structured interviewing they remained the most appropriate method for me to use for a number of reasons. First, as already noted above qualitative methods allow us to ‘...study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin and Lincoln, 1995: 16). In similar ways Mason argues that through

...qualitative research we can explore a wide array of dimensions of the social world, including the texture and weave of everyday life, the understandings, experiences and imaginings of our research participants, the ways that social processes, institutions, discourses or relationships work and the significance of the meanings they generate (Mason, 1996:1).

Second, as South (2005: 11) argues (in a study not dissimilar to mine) the use of qualitative methods, in the form of in-depth, semi-structured interviews such as those conducted in this study, can be used to demonstrate how individuals are more than ‘passive victims of fate’ in terms of, for example, policy and its implementation and how they actually inter-act with and respond in ways relevant, ultimately, to some of the proposed policy outcomes. Third, and most importantly, I very much wanted to hear how residents of the Leys, an area that has been ‘othered’ and territorially stigmatized more or less since its construction in the 1950s interpreted, narrated and presented their own experiences of living on the estate. I wanted to see if there was a counter-narrative that could be contrasted with the dominant narratives reflected in policy, media representations, the views of professionals and residents of other parts of Oxford. Again, this seems important to me as a way of trying to encourage a move away from the dominant monologue which defines and is directed at the

residents of the estate to one in which, as some level at least, there is a dialogue informed by alternative and seldom-heard voices.

I argue that utilizing qualitative, semi-structured interviews was the most appropriate way to access the data I wished to access in order explore and answer my research questions (Marshall, 1996). However, Willmott and Young's statement which opened this section – that we can only report what participants say they do – is not quite the whole picture. While I have tried to reproduce an accurate depiction of the participants' views, experiences and narratives I also recognise that that qualitative research of this kind consists of negotiation and the construction/re-construction of the meanings given to social interactions and that the data gathered through such interviewing is highly situated and has no necessarily fixed meaning (Popay and Williams, 1994). Thus the researcher may report on what participants have told them but they also play a significant role in constructing the meanings and significance attached to what the participants may have said and researchers need to be actively conscious of this as they proceed through their work.

#### **4.5 Appraising Qualitative Research.**

Questions remain about the 'quality' of qualitative research. This is partly because of the way in which qualitative research has been historically judged against the same criteria used in quantitative research, the legacy of certain forms of positivism, and the reliance of qualitative research on relatively small sample numbers which are seen by some as unscientific or unrepresentative or even anecdotal. Much written to challenge these assumptions as well as to highlight that qualitative and quantitative approaches yield very different, but equally valuable data lead some to argue for the development of alternative criteria to appraise qualitative research (Lincoln and Guba, 2003) while others advocate the re-conceptualisation the concept of validity (Richardson and Pierre, 2005). Others have widened the discussion to include consideration of validity positions and the production of

various frameworks to appraise qualitative research (see for example, Tracy, 2010). Others have cautioned against the search for standardised, checklists that seek to ensure the 'quality' of qualitative research (Barbour, 2001) and that such checklists are not nuanced enough to reflect the range and diversity of qualitative research (Guba and Lincoln, 2005). It is important to acknowledge that it is the range of opinions, different experiences and interpretations that participants express rather than more quantitative aspects of the sample that is central to qualitative research (Gaskell, 2000, Silverman, 1997) and, therefore, it is the appropriateness and adequacy of the sample selected that is most relevant in assessing qualitative research outcomes (Field and Morse 1985).

In this study I have employed the framework developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to underpin the rigour of my research design. This framework, although built around four main criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, also allows for flexibility and diversity identified as characterizing qualitative research methods (Guba and Lincoln, 2005). Credibility involves the extent to which participants' views of the phenomena are faithfully reproduced. One method of doing this is prolonged engagement within the field of study. This I have done through my work in the area over some twenty-five years or so. There is a risk, of course, that through this immersion, I may miss important issues or perhaps my interpretations are clouded or influenced by my closeness to participants. I have tried to avoid this by reading, re-reading and returning to the original transcripts throughout the process of analysis and while writing up my findings, to make sure my interpretations that emerged through the analysis process remain robust. Transferability, the extent to which findings can be transferred to other settings is established through the use of 'thick description' throughout my findings chapters and, in drawing on existing studies such as to confirm or extend existing understandings of what might be broadly described as community studies. I have also demonstrated dependability, the consistency of my findings, by providing



a clear audit trail of the methods used and why. Finally, confirmability, the extent to which other evidence corroborates the findings, is demonstrated by the audit trail and my practice as a reflexive researcher.

#### **4.6 Sampling and Recruitment**

Sample size in qualitative research remains a much discussed question which relates to the earlier discussion around validity and appraisal of qualitative research. Saturation is the guiding principle in qualitative research; generating data to the point at which you are no longer generating anything that sheds new light on your research question (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). This can be judged, to some extent, by coding data alongside data generation. It is quite straightforward to note when new codes are no longer added. Two reflections on sample size are considered here. First, Guest et al (2006), who revisited a dataset from a qualitative study involving 60 interviews and re-analysed the data to pin down when they had reached data saturation. They found that all codes had been developed by interview 12 and after six interviews, only one additional code was added. I did not have this experience with my interviews and found new codes were developed with virtually all the interviews.

Mason (2010) analysed 560 PhD theses that used qualitative interviewing and found that the majority of sample sizes were multiples of 10. The author suggests that this either reflects a lack of understanding by doctoral students of qualitative methods or is an indication of the tyranny of ethics committees; being forced to provide a sample size in advance of conducting research may lead researchers to stick to this sample size regardless of when data saturation is reached. Over-interviewing is, of course, both inefficient and ethically questionable in terms of taking up participants' time when their data may not add anything to the study. I conducted 20 interviews during my fieldwork although I did not have a pre-set number in mind. I did, however, want to develop a rich, deep and, in Geertz's terms, 'thick' set of data from the field.

I did not have any specific sample criteria other than the participants had to be residents of the estate (but no particular length of residency was required) and I aimed for a diverse sample of participants. The project participants for the semi-structured interviews were recruited from residents who live on Blackbird and Greater Leys. To recruit my participants I utilised my knowledge and familiarity with the estate and the networks I had developed over the last twenty years of working on and with people from this area. I did not, however, recruit directly from organisations I have contact with or individuals personally known to me. Rather than interview people I knew or knew of I asked people I did know to suggest other individuals I might contact and who might be willing or interested in participating in my study. After initial contact was made with these potential participants I would contact them either by telephone, email or in person to explain the scope and aims of the study, the nature of the questions in the semi-structured interviews and the commitment to anonymity and control potential participants would have over any transcripts produced. A small number of people (five), having gone through this initial process decided not to participate in the study. I also recruited participants while conducting my fieldwork on the estate through spontaneous contact with people in the community centre, sports centre and other public spaces who I met through casual conversation, introductions from other participants and those whose interest was sparked by my presence on the estate. Once again, after initial contact was made, I would explain the details and background of the study and show the potential participant the interview schedule. Once again a small number of people declined to take part after initial discussions but most were interested in participating and although I did not interview all potential participants (due to time constraints, theirs and mine) I was able to successfully recruit without much difficulty from across a range of ages, genders and ethnicities (see Table One).

**Table One – Sample Profile.**

Name	Gender	Employment Status <sup>10</sup>	Age	Ethnicity <sup>11</sup>	Relationship status <sup>12</sup>	Children
Rachel	F	R	64	WB	W	Y
Martha	F	R	60	WB	M	Y
Jack	M	E(p/t)	61	WB	M	Y
Sara	F	IS/HB	35	MBC	S	Y
Liz	F	E(p/t)	47	WB	M	Y
Mike	M	E	50	BC	M	Y
Susan	F	E	34	WB	M	N
Iz	F	S	19	BA	S	N
Rosie	F	E	31	BC	LTR	Y
Les	M	JSA	52	WB	D	Y
Mags	F	IS/HB	40	OW	S	Y
Joel	M	R	67	BC	M	N
Ulla	F	E(p/t)	33	WB	LTR	Y
Will	M	E	28	MBC	LTR	N
Jan	F	E(p/t)	32	WB	M	Y
Geoff	M	E	27	BC	LTR	Y
Tina	F	E(p/t)	32	WB	LTR	Y
Ella	F	IS/HB	41	WI	S	Y
Charles	M	DLA/HB	57	WB	M	N
Ronnie	M	JSA/HB	20	WB	S	N

<sup>10</sup> Key: Employment Status – DLA = Disability Living Allowance; E = Employed; E(p/t) = Employed part-time; HB = Housing Benefit; IS = Income Support; R = Retired; JSA = Job Seekers Allowance; S = Student.

<sup>11</sup> KEY: Ethnic categories replicate those used in the 2011 Census (England). Therefore WB = White British; BC = Black Caribbean; BA = Black African; M = Mixed or Multiple (MBA = White and Black African, MBC = White and Black Caribbean), WI = White Irish; OW = Other White.

<sup>12</sup> S = Single; M = Married; D = Divorced; W = Widowed; LTR = Long Term Relationship.

#### **4.8 The Interviews.**

Participants were interviewed by myself over a period of ten months on the Leys either in people's homes or in the community centre, the IT Hub or the Sports Centre. All but one of the participants agreed to have the interview recorded on a digital recorder. Nineteen interviews were fully transcribed by a transcriber and I took extensive notes on the remaining interview where the participant did not wish to be recorded. The interviews ranged from forty-five minutes to an hour and half in length and averaged just over an hour. I used a combination of asking participants to talk openly about their experiences of living on the Leys and a semi structured interview guide (see appendix two) which I produced based on my review of the literature in this area and my own knowledge and experience. This guide was revised slightly as early interviews raised new points to cover. These changes included the introduction of a section of more detailed questions about the nature of the community (section three of the topic guide), community leaders (also section three) and I removed some topic themes around disorganisation and disorder as these appeared to be both confusing for some participants and I was also concerned that these questions were a little leading. I also revised the section on experiences of the local authority and other agencies and the experiences of 'regeneration initiatives' in order to make these sections more open and less detailed. I was keen not to direct participants too much and encouraged them to talk openly about their experiences.

#### **4.8 Data Analysis.**

The 19 interviews that were recored were transcribed in full by a professional transcriber. This resulted in over 200,000 words of transcribed material. As one participant delcined to be recorded I took extensive written notes on that interview. Of course, there are a number of significant observations to be made about such a sizeable amount of qualitative

data. First, I have generated a rich set of deep, qualitative data which provides insights into how individuals construct the world and construct meanings for that world and their place within it (Dingwall, 1997).

The process of analysis began after the first few interviews. I fully immersed myself within the data by listening back to the recordings and reading each transcript several times, making a note of issues raised, unexpected comments and things that leapt out at me. I then used Nvivo software to start to code the data using Charmaz's approach to data analysis (2006) and identifying codes from the data extracts. There was no initial structure, just a generation of numerous codes (Saldana, 2009). The analysis was conducted alongside the interviews.. After the open coding of the first few transcripts, I began to develop a coding structure with categories, codes and sub codes (Saldana, 2009).

Once the data were coded, I carried out a more conceptual analysis of the data using constant comparison, trying to find any 'deviant' cases and asking questions of the data (Silverman, 1997). Four key themes emerged that related directly to my initial research questions and these included; participants' descriptions of the estate, participants' experience of the views of others of the estate, participants' perceptions of key strengths of the estate and those who live there, participants' perceptions of key weaknesses of the estate and those who live there. The overall approach to coding and thematic analysis resulted in the collation of deep and rich data which is reported on in chapters six, seven and eight.

#### **4.9 Ethical Considerations.**

My experience of working on the Leys has provided me with very good access to potential participants in the community, local authority and voluntary organisations. However, it is also the case that such access and proximity places specific ethical and other obligations on me as a researcher which require continuous self-reflection on my work, its motives and the way I conduct it (Hilsen, 2006). In addition, I am aware that my relatively

privileged position (in relation to resources available to me, my official positions within both the university I work for and the organisations I work with) create intense demands for the ethical and proper conduct of my work (Coy, 2006). Such demands are, in part, an explanation for employing research methods where high levels of reciprocity and accountability between myself and participants will be facilitated and data and materials developed can be closely reviewed by community participants. In addition, this research aims to create usable outcomes for all participants (see for example, chapter seven below). All research methods and practices were designed and carried out with detailed reference to the BSA ethical guidelines<sup>13</sup> (of which I am a member), close discussion with my supervisor and other colleagues as appropriate and through discussion with potential participants and stakeholders. All participants were provided with a detailed information sheet and all data and all materials were completely anonymised. It was made clear to all participants that they could withdraw from the project at any time and that their contributions would not be included in any way if they did not wish them to be. As should be the case with all research the issue of ethics and appropriate academic practice was an element of the study that required constant review, reflection and critical consideration as the project developed and as the interviews were conducted.

In Bourdieu's words the researcher 'has to situate oneself within "real" activity as such' and in some ways I have done this (1990: 52). However, in the case of my research, it may be more accurate to suggest that I have tried to situate myself within multiple narratives about 'real' activity and life experiences.

For example, when I began this project I had forgotten how powerful and ubiquitous the everyday discourses and micro-structures of power really are. How they have been or are able to reproduce and replicate themselves consistently at the institutional, linguistic and

---

<sup>13</sup> [www.britsoc.co.uk/equality/Statement+Ethical+Practice.htm](http://www.britsoc.co.uk/equality/Statement+Ethical+Practice.htm)

individual levels. I had also forgotten how successfully ‘normalised’ such everyday power imbalances have become. Furthermore, there appears to be a level at which distrust and mistrust that can be detected among some policy makers, those charged with implementing policy, other professionals and commentators towards those these very offices are supposed to support..

Elements of the discussion (and no doubt analysis and assessment) hinge on the conceptions held by some, commentators and practitioners, of those at the centre of these issues, in this case residents of the estates in question, and, arguably in this sense little has changed since the days of Samuel Smiles. With the discussions riddled through, implicitly and explicitly, with notion of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ people, ‘worthy’ and ‘unworthy’ and so on. All this was associated with a strong sense of how much authority and justification professionals have the ‘right’ to interfere, intrude and intervene in deprived areas and the lives of people who live there – accompanied by a whole language of justified intervention.

#### **4.10 Conclusion.**

In this chapter I have explained, evaluated and, as far as possible, justified the methods I chose to use for this thesis. I have explored the strengths and weaknesses of my approach, my relationship to the location of the field work setting, the extent to which my own identity as a researcher affected my use of my methods and analysis and my how my own political (with a small p) position may have impacted on my study. I have tried to demonstrate that throughout the process of data generation and analysis I maintained a reflexive and iterative approach to my work, my interviewing technique and approach and the analysis of my data. I believe my methods generated a rich and informed data set that has supported the development of a robust set of findings which are consistent with Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) framework for assessing the quality of qualitative research in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability and that the accounts discussed

represent a careful and considered reflection of what participants said, felt and highlighted as being of importance to them. In the next chapter I will examine some aspects of the way in which quantitative data has been used to construct another version of the Leys in terms of official measures of deprivation and other issues of policy concern.



## Chapter Five –Exploring The Leys and its Reputation.

### 5.1 Introduction.

This chapter explores some of the ways in which the Leys is presented in local and national media representations and how, in particular, the disturbances on the estate in September 1991 appear to have specifically contributed to the negative reputation of the area. I also draw on the 2011 National Census<sup>14</sup> profile of Oxford City as a whole to provide a city-wide context for the area at the focus of this study: Blackbird and Greater Leys.

Like many cities, the strength and persistence of some of the specific spatial and community identities in Oxford are very powerful and certain constructions of some of the spaces on the East side of the City as ‘*Other*’ can be both dramatic and problematic for residents and service providers alike. Oxford is, on the one hand the ‘city of dreaming spires’, golden stone and what the *Sunday Mail* has called “poly-dollies.”<sup>15</sup> On the other, it is seemingly equally well known for “hotting”,<sup>16</sup> its high-crack areas and has been portrayed as one of Britain’s “dangerous places” (Campbell, 1993). Oxford has had its fair-share of high profile initiatives to ‘end’ this division including *Oxford Inspires*, *One City Oxford* and *Evolving Oxford* as well as a number of local policy interventions. Despite this, the city remains very much an inside/outside space and place - with the ring-road offering a clear demarcation of the two cities.

This is a particularly resilient discursive construction of space and place which appears to resist attempts to replace it with more positive narratives. I can provide two particularly relevant examples from my own recent experience. A few years ago I was invited to join a Home Office regional network focusing on crime and disorder in the South-

---

<sup>14</sup> [www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011](http://www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011).

<sup>15</sup> A term applied by the Sunday Mail to female students at what was then Oxford Polytechnic.

<sup>16</sup> This term became popular locally and nationally in the early 1990s as a term that referred to the stealing and racing of cars around local housing estates and communal areas in the east of Oxford.

East of England and duly attended the initial meeting at the University of Surrey in Guildford. By way of introduction our Home Office host for the day introduced the session by stating that he was the individual responsible for designing the response that stopped “hotting on the Leys”.

On another occasion I was asked to make a short presentation to a group of ‘top’ business and organisational leaders new to the region as part of a leadership development course. I shared the session with the Principal of the Oxford Academy. In an attempt to undermine the common perceptions of many in the room he located the academy within the context of the deprivation and problems of Blackbird Leys. This included claiming that Blackbird Leys was the first place in England to experience urban riots and disorder and had been terrorised by ‘repeated joyriding and anti-social behaviour.’ He seemed completely unaware of the riots that characterised numerous British cities in the later 1970s and early-to-mid-80s (all of which pre-date the ‘riots’ of 1991-1993 in Oxford) or, more plausibly, all urban riots had started to bleed into one single narrative symbolic of urban decay and deprivation. A kind of generic marker of ‘sink estates’ and the apparent failure of post-war urban planning and organisation. Needless to say I do not share these views – although I can understand, to a certain degree, how they have come into place. For example, my initial analysis of the interviews I conducted and coded suggest that the events of 1991-1993, as poorly understood and reported as they may have been, have been very significant in creating a negative image of the estates in local, national and even global representations and views of the estate.

The Audit Commission’s *Regeneration Inspection Report*, 2009 noted that the estate had ‘suffered from under-investment with poor housing, run-down community facilities and a degraded environment’ (Audit Commission, 2009:11) for the three decades prior to 2000. Whether it follows, as the Audit Commission suggests, that a consequence of this is that

‘these communities had become inward looking and self-contained with a culture of low achievement reflecting poor life opportunities’ (2009:11) is up for debate.

Despite this recorded under-investment it is also the case that over the last twenty years the estate has been the focus of a number of initiatives aimed at alleviating deprivation. For example, in 1995 the Oxford City Council was awarded £6.7 million from national Single Regeneration funding to support regeneration projects across the city as a whole and three of these were directed to Blackbird Leys. This included a total sum of £2.4 million from 1995 to 1999 for Blackbird Leys and Temple Cowley in Round One which was linked to development of a business park on the former car works site, initiatives and activities designed to increase employment and training for residents of these areas. A total sum of £1million for Blackbird Leys in Round Two for the demolition of a block of system-built flats with linked construction training and other provision. Leys Linx in Round Five which received £400,000 between 1999-2004 aimed at enhancing capacity building, developing community buildings and linking agencies and providers around training, advice and guidance for employment. This Single Regeneration Budge funding was extended by £2 million in 2005 to 2008 through the Oxford Area Programme funded by South East England Development Agency and the City Council. The City Council was also successful in securing £6.8 million Growth Point funding in 2008. In 2009 a partnership group developed out of the Local Strategic Partnership successfully bid for £1 million Local Area Agreement ‘Reward’ money to support the delivery of a new project entitled *Breaking the Cycles of Deprivation* which aimed to build on the work outlined above and to support the delivery of the Oxford City Regeneration Framework published in 2009.

Despite these and other interventions many areas on the Leys continue to score poorly against local and national indicators of deprivation. Furthermore, the area struggles to overcome the

reputation for crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour it has acquired. A resident survey carried out by local agencies identified crime and anti-social behaviour as significant concerns as have the City Council's various *Talkback*<sup>17</sup> surveys undertaken since 2002. In the 1990s Blackbird Leys had a national reputation for joy-riding displays on the estate, which was fueled by newspaper and television coverage of races around the streets. While its notoriety may have faded nationally, the Leys still has a poor reputation locally.

Various studies investigating the link between place, identity and reputation, identify that communities can quickly acquire a reputation (good or bad) and once established, it is very difficult to change regardless of how an area may change (Banks, 2005, Dean and Hastings, 2000, Howarth, 2002, Robertson et al., 2008). It could be argued that one of the problems for the Leys is that planners designed the estate with no thoroughfares in a bid to minimise traffic and noise pollution. One unintended consequence of this is that few residents from other parts of Oxford have reason to visit the Leys and see what it is like for themselves. This issue is significant for the Leys because the estate's reputation influences how residents, agencies and the wider public feel about the area. It is also important as some scholars have argued that tackling reputational issues and image perceptions of large estates is essential if successful regeneration and change is to be achieved (Arthurson, 2001; Brattbakk and Hansen, 2004; Dean and Hastings, 2000; Hastings and Dean, 2003; McLaren, et al., 2005).

Narratives and constructions of specific spaces (and non-specific in some sense)<sup>18</sup> are central to an understanding of the processes under examination here. It is clear to me from a close reading of local and national documents but also from participation in various meetings

---

<sup>17</sup> See <http://consultation.oxford.gov.uk/inovem/consult/ti/system/list/Consultations?type=C>

<sup>18</sup> By this I mean that some notions and ideas are clearly linked to readily identifiable spaces however others are more generic attitudes and conceptions that appear to exist in a kind of 'free-floating' sense readily attached to specific areas and locations as suit or as triggered by key environmental, social or spatial factors.

and action groups over many years that notions of ‘spatiality’ are very important. The Oxford City Regeneration Steering group meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> July 2009 was about particular spaces and places around the city of Oxford. This was an important discussion in which a number of individuals, representing key stakeholders and agencies from the various statutory and voluntary sectors of the City came together to discuss the management of the regeneration agenda not just in the City but across Oxfordshire. As the discussion developed it became apparent that much of the focus was delineated along spatial lines – areas that, due to a variety of factors are deserving or require some form of intervention in order to tackle social exclusion and deprivation but delineated along quite rigidly defined sense of space, neighbourhoods and communities across the city.

## **5.2 The Leys and Its Reputation.**

Blackbird Leys is a large housing estate located on the eastern periphery of Oxford City. The main part of the estate was built in the early 1950s with the express purpose of providing local, affordable social housing to house the growing number of car manufacturing (and related industry) workers and their families employed by British Leyland, Unipart and others in that part of the City (Harvey and Hayter, 1993). Looking at the BMW owned Mini plant now (which occupies around one-third of the original British Leyland site) it is difficult to conceive of how, at its height in 1973, car manufacturing and related industries employed nearly 30,000 people in this area of the City (Ward, et al, 1993). The completion of first main phase of the estate was followed in the early 1990s by the construction of the new part of the estate known as Greater Leys. Taken together the two estates are now known as The Leys and are home to 4,200 households and around 13,500 people.

The estate has a poor reputation within Oxford, the wider county of Oxfordshire and nationally. For example, the estate features on the website *Chavtowns – Britain’s Worst*

*Places to Live*<sup>19</sup> which provides a forum for people to post their views and experiences on what, apparently, ‘estate agents and local councillors do not want you to know’.<sup>20</sup> The website makes clear how ‘bad’ the estate is for those who live there and for the rest of the city. As one posting states:

I can’t believe nobody has added this yet. That’s right; the whole south of Oxford is a chav infested shit hole. Why don’t you come to Blackbird Leys and have a lovely look for yourself! Watch the 10 year olds steal motorbikes in an attempt to impress their peers and to look “well hard”. Let the happy joyriders burn out cars on the fields on which kids play football. Ask the locals about the stabbings and killings in and around the south of Oxford.

The local media, especially the *Oxford Mail* appear to delight in reporting what might be called the seedier side of Oxford as they see the estate. For example, in 2012 I was asked to contribute to a BBC Oxford news report on crime in Oxford and one of the questions the reporter wanted me to address was ‘is it inevitable that there should be problems of crime in Blackbird Leys?’.

The *Oxford Mail*’s headlines and coverage are frequently focused on the difficulties the estate and its inhabitants face. A simple random selection of headlines and major stories reflects the general sense of the area conveyed by the paper. These depictions focus on a range of negative aspects of life on the estates for example, on the prevalence of drugs, drugs gangs and drug use such as:

‘We’ll Smash Drugs Gangs’ – Police make pledge to estate residents.

---

<sup>19</sup> See [www.chavtowns.co.uk/](http://www.chavtowns.co.uk/)

<sup>20</sup> Chavtowns web-site strap-line – see [www.chavtowns.co.uk/](http://www.chavtowns.co.uk/)

*Oxford Mail*, 18<sup>th</sup> February, 2006, 1.

Drugs are Dealt Near Play Area.

*Oxford Mail*, 31<sup>st</sup> August, 2007, 5.

Blackbird Leys: 'Block this path off to druggies'

*Oxford Mail*, 17<sup>th</sup> March, 2010

In addition the *Oxford Mail* also draws repeated attention to the behaviour of young people, especially in relation to anti-social behavior, and regularly publishes articles naming individuals in receipt of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders and Acceptable behaviour Orders along with maps of the most recently imposed dispersal orders. In 2009 *The Oxford Mail* engaged in a campaign aimed at naming a local boy under the heading;

Let Us Name Feral Youth.

*Oxford Mail*, 12<sup>th</sup> December, 2009, 1.

The paper is also quick to focus on violent crime, such as knife crime and stabbings, in this area and regularly reports on such events on the Leys.

Boy Knifed 9 Times – Leys Teen Repeatedly Stabbed in Buttocks in 'Drive-By' Attack.

*Oxford Mail*, 19<sup>th</sup> February, 2010, 1.

Overall the estate is portrayed as a fairly negative place where little positive or constructive takes place.

### **5.3 “Hotting”, Blackbirds Leys and the National Media Coverage.**

National media coverage was quick to focus its attention on the events occurring on the Leys in 1991. Not surprisingly the contrast between the apparent occurrence of ‘riots’ and serious public disorder in the city of ‘dreaming spires’ which at the time, was enjoying in weekly depiction in episodes of *Inspector Morse*,<sup>21</sup> was a key hook for media attention. This contrast was not lost, for example, on Austin, then the regular cartoonist for *The Guardian* whose front-page cartoon on the 4<sup>th</sup> September depicted a small car driving down the High Street with a variety of archetypal Oxford buildings in the background while sporting a sticker in the rear window which states ‘My other GTI is on Blackbird Leys’<sup>22</sup>. Furthermore, as mentioned above, the disturbances in Oxford occurred at the same time as apparently similar incidents were taking place in twelve other British cities (Power and Tunstall, 1997).

There is, of course, the added context that the apparent acceleration of serious car crime in Oxford not only occurred in a city as well known for its car production as its universities but at the same time as that very industry was in serious decline. Many of the older residents who turned out to watch the ‘hotting’ were or would have been employees of British Leyland and then Rover. Many of those involved in the ‘hotting’ would have seen any chance of a decent job at the Cowley works rapidly disappearing.

As can often be the case national newspaper coverage picked up on the story of what was happening on Blackbird Leys later than the local media. In fact the bulk of coverage in newspapers such as *The Guardian* and *The Observer* begins on or after the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September 1991 when the situation was coming to a conclusion. What is also interesting though is that direct references to the occurrences on Blackbird Leys continue well into 1994 as an almost a continuously revisited narrative and footage from the time, though now archived, is still available on the BBC web-site<sup>23</sup>.

---

<sup>21</sup> *Inspector Morse* was a very popular ITV programme screened between 1987 and 1993 based on the novels of the same name written by Oxford based author Colin Dexter.

<sup>22</sup> *The Guardian*, 4<sup>th</sup> September 1991, page 1.

<sup>23</sup> [http://www.bbc.co.uk/oxford/content/articles/2007/10/01/joy\\_feature.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/oxford/content/articles/2007/10/01/joy_feature.shtml)



By the 4<sup>th</sup> of September the situation on Blackbird Leys made the front page of *The Guardian* under the headline ‘Police Clear Riot Streets’ reporting on how the police ‘riot-hit’ areas of Oxford and Cardiff had cleared the streets of ‘outsiders and the media in an attempt to suppress further trouble’ (1). However, the success of this tactic was, apparently, limited as the paper went on to note,

The worst trouble last night was on the Blackbird Leys estate in Oxford, where for the fifth night gangs of youngsters assembled and “hotters” defiantly raced stolen cars in front of the police. Soon after midnight police cleared the centre.

*The Guardian*, 4<sup>th</sup> September 1991, p 1.

In a more in-depth, and superficially at least, analytical piece on the 8<sup>th</sup> September 1991, *The Guardian* offered an exploration of the situation on the Leys under the heading ‘Contempt and Hatred on a Sixties Estate’. In this piece the author attempted to locate the occurrences on the Leys in both a chronological and explanatory context providing information on how those engaged in the joyriding came to be known as ‘hotters’. However, in doing so it is difficult not to see this type of coverage as contributing to the emerging urban mythology of the ‘riots’ as much as providing a form of informative analysis.

Under the sub-heading ‘Core problems on the Periphery’ *The Guardian* reported on what it saw as the important shift from public disorder occurring in the centre of cities and towns out to more peripheral areas of British cities.

The periphery story is interesting. It was the periphery rather than the inner cores, where several riots exploded in the past two years. It was Bristol’s Hartcliffe estate, five miles outside the city centre, instead of St. Paul’s in the inner core that ignited 10

years ago. Oxford's Blackbird Leys and Cardiff's Ely estates were two others to catch the headlines. The periphery can be even more isolated than the centre, without supermarkets, cinemas or sports facilities of its own, and cut off from the centre by lack of public transport.

*The Guardian*, 9th January 1993:22.

In February 1994 *The Guardian* ran a story that reported on how the apparently national trend for joyriding across the UK had now run out of steam taking the opportunity to remind readers that this phenomena had led to 'juveniles challenging police on the Blackbird Leys estate, Oxford, by racing stolen cars, sparked confrontation and riots in 1991 and 1992.'

Indeed, for many national newspapers the incidents of the late summer of 1991 have become signature short-hand for defining the estate and a persistent use of the 'hotting' or 'joy-riding' motif has come to characterise national media coverage of the estate. Thus as recently as autumn 2010 *The Daily Mail* would report under the headline 'Car thief, 7, is a real mini' that children as young as seven may be involved in joyriding in Oxford and continues:

The shocking revelation comes as the city battles to shake off its reputation as the joyride capital. A six-year crackdown - particularly on Oxford's notorious Blackbird Leys estate - has halved car thefts.

*The Daily Mail*, 7<sup>th</sup> September 2010.

As we have seen above the narratives associated with the events of 1991 are constantly reinforced through an on-going reporting of the Leys as 'problematic space' characterised by a series of crime, disorder and anti-social occurrences. However, whatever

the nature or characteristics of the events reported they are often framed within the events of 1991. It is as if the specific problem of 'hotting' and the events of 1991 facilitate the presentation of the estate in a more general narrative of systematic crime, disorder and social disintegration.

In addition, the media reputation of the area appears to legitimate (for some commentators anyway) the presentation of the estate and those who live there in any way they wish. Thus, a *Daily Mail* review of a BBC Two Open Space television programme entitled 'Open Space' which analysed the decline of the motorcar industry in Oxford became a vehicle for a series of ideologically inspired assaults on ex-workers at the car plant and those who continued to live on the estate.

I would not have thought it possible to make a nostalgic film about the demise of a British car factory without mentioning the industrial disputes which constantly brought the production lines to a halt, the bolshie shop stewards on the rampage, the intimidating mass meetings in the car park ... they pretty well destroyed our capacity to make motor vehicles ... There was a certain air of resentment that the nearby seat of learning offered employment to 10,000 people and that it was still there, flourishing, while the factories were disappearing. But then the colleges were there first, even if the residents of Cowley apparently seldom join the tourists to look at them: a pity - they might have picked up a few hints about how to survive.

*The Daily Mail*, June 23, 1992.

In their discussion of stigma and regeneration, Hastings and Dean (2003) observe that 'every city and town in the UK has neighbourhoods which have reputations for problems such as poverty, crime, drug abuse or physical decay' (1). These 'stigmatised areas are often

deemed to have long-standing, intractable problem images rooted in their history (See also, Power 1987, Forest and Kearns, 1999). A number of the characteristics that Hastings and Dean (2003) identify in these neighbourhoods can be seen to apply to Blackbird and Greater Leys including physical isolation, limited leisure and retail facilities. Furthermore, such neighbourhoods receive routine vilification in popular and media discourses, including the portrayal of residents as 'different' and/or 'deviant'. (Hastings and Dean, 2003, Damer 1992, Murie, 1997). Rendering, over time, these estates as 'places of last resort' both in terms of the local housing system and popular mythology and residents are seen as possessing different and subterranean value systems (see also Reynolds, 1986, Damer, 1992).

The norms and values of the poorest communities are anti-authoritarian and tend towards lawbreaking, therefore are open to drug use. Because of this organisations which might challenge drug use either do not exist or are not supported by local people.

Home Office (2003:4)

Central as this data can be to understanding the focus, direction and approach of policy, the examination of such data provides a further important dimension for the critical analysis presented here. Indeed, the sheer weight and extent of the data gathered by official agencies about those who live in areas of deprivation alerts us to the high level of social, economic, and health surveillance a significant number of the population live with on a daily basis. Furthermore, the outcome of such intense surveillance not only results in the acquisition of huge amounts of information about these places and those who live in them, the very extent of the data can seemingly 'demand' and justify a wide variety of interventions from local government authorities and their sub-contracting agencies. In addition, the existence of such data (and subsequent interventions) should also remind us of how,

conversely, more affluent areas and those who live there are neither subject to such surveillance or interventions (Pease, 2009).

#### **5.4. Oxford: A General Overview.**

Oxford is a relatively small but affluent City located in the rural county of Oxfordshire. Overall, it is a city with a highly skilled workforce, relatively low unemployment, developed technological and scientific sectors and a strong tourist sector. The City (both in terms of local, national and global images, reputation and politically) has been strongly associated with the University of Oxford since the thirteenth century and this association remains highly significant for the City, its sense of identity and its 'success' (The City Council refers to this as the 'education brand')<sup>24</sup>. The City, as a consequence at least in part, of the presence of the University of Oxford, enjoys high levels of cultural, intellectual and social capital and – at its centre – is equipped with high quality cultural and educational facilities, restaurants, bars and shopping. In many ways it is highly desirable place to live, work and study. Certainly, this element of its identity and reputation is of massive significance to many residents, businesses and stakeholders across the city.

Oxford's population grew by 12% over the decade 2003–2013 making it the eighth fastest growing English city. It has 155,000 residents and an additional 45,000 people live in adjacent urban areas. The city's population is projected to reach 165,000 by 2023. At the 2011 Census, 24% of the city's adult population were fulltime students. 32,000 students were enrolled for full-time study at the two universities in 2013/14. This gives the city a very young age profile – in 2011, one-third of residents were young adults aged 18–29 years. Oxford is an ethnically diverse city, and it is also internationally diverse. 22% of residents were from a black or minority ethnic group in 2011, compared with 13% in England as a whole. Another 14% of residents were from a white but non-British ethnic background. 28%

---

<sup>24</sup> Oxford City Council, (2015), *Oxford Profile 2015: A Summary of Key Facts about Oxford's Population, Economy and Housing*.

of residents were born outside the UK. 46,000 people commute into the city for work –mostly by car – but the majority of people who live and work in the city travel by public transport, bicycle or on foot. Oxford has the seventh highest number of international visitors for any UK city. An estimated nine million domestic and international visitors come to the city for tourism each years.<sup>25</sup>

The city has a large number of people employed in the universities, the hospitals and the public sector, but has other important sectors including car manufacturing, publishing, tourism, hospitality and a growing hi-tech sector. It is home to 4,300 businesses providing around 104,000 jobs. Oxford's population, overall, is well-qualified by national standards with over two-fifths of its adult residents possessing a university degree. However, at state schools, children are under performing compared with children in the rest of England.<sup>26</sup> Although Oxford is prosperous in many ways, 12 of its 85 'Super Output Areas' are among the 20% most deprived areas in England. One-quarter of Oxford's children – 6,600 – live below the poverty line. The Marmot Indicators for 2015 demonstrate that the number of children in receipt of free school meals who attain a good level of development by age 5 is significantly worse than the England average. Likewise levels of GCSE 5A\*-C attainment among students in receipt of free school meal (including English & Maths) is also significantly worse than the England average<sup>27</sup>.

Access to affordable housing is also a critical issue in the city as Oxford is the least affordable city for housing in the UK. Even at the lower end of the market, house prices are 10 times average national earnings. 30% of residents privately rent their home at prices which

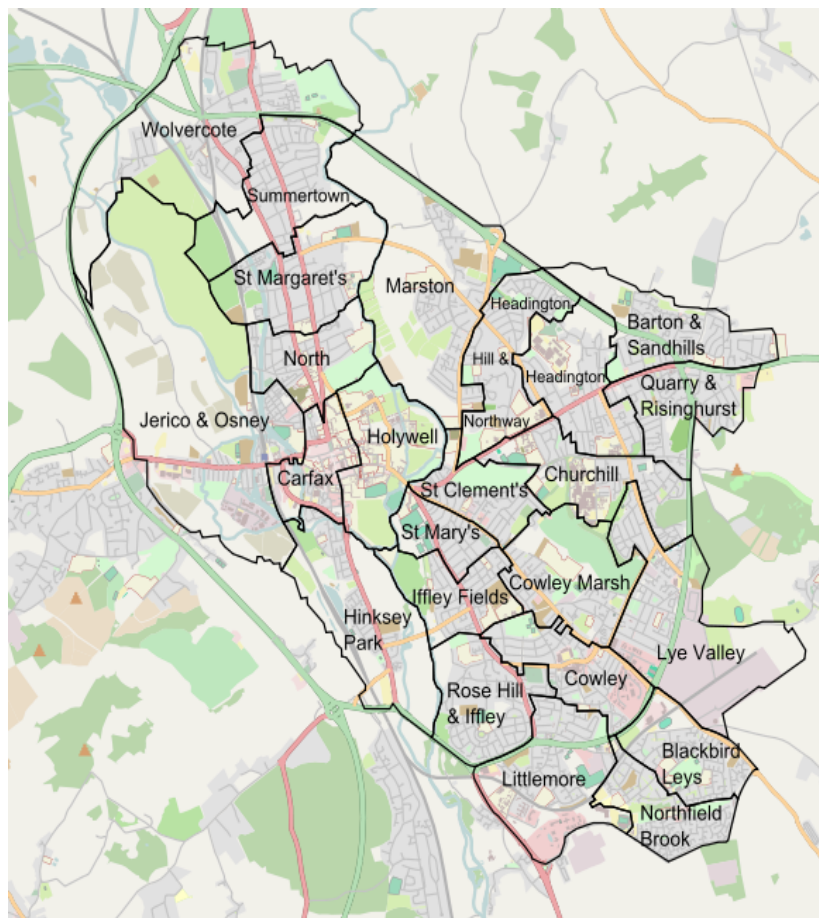
---

<sup>25</sup> Oxford City Council, (2015), *Oxford Profile 2015: A Summary of Key Facts about Oxford's Population, Economy and Housing*.

<sup>26</sup> Public Health England, Marmot Indicators for Local Authorities, Oxfordshire, 2015 available at [https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile-group/marmot/profile/marmot-indicators/area-search-results/E12000008?search\\_type=list-child-areas&place\\_name=South%20East](https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile-group/marmot/profile/marmot-indicators/area-search-results/E12000008?search_type=list-child-areas&place_name=South%20East)

<sup>27</sup> Public Health/UCL Institute for Public Health, Marmot Indicators for Local Authorities in England, 2015-see <http://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile-group/marmot>

are among the most expensive outside London. The city needs an estimated 24,000–32,000 new homes by 2031 to meet anticipated housing demand.



A Map of  
Oxford Split  
into Electoral  
Wards

### 5.5. Profiling the Leys: 2011 Census Data<sup>28</sup>.

The Leys is an estate on the southern periphery of Oxford, to the south of Cowley and, significantly, outside the ring-road. The estate is closely located to the BMW Mini Plant (see figure 7) and has strong historical ties to the traditional car manufacturing industry developed by William Morris (Lord Nuffield) from 1913 (Hayter and Harvey, 1993) and then British Leyland and Rover before being sold to BMW in the late 1990s. Historically, the automotive industry was the main employer both of residents of the estate and the wide city with 28,500 people being employed in this industry at the height of car and car-related production in 1973 (Ward, et al., 1993). The larger area of the estate, Blackbird Leys, was

<sup>28</sup> All the data in this section is sourced from the Oxford City Council summary profile of Oxford City based on the 2011 ONS Census Data – see [https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20134/census/501/2011\\_census](https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20134/census/501/2011_census)

constructed in the 1950s and 1960s as part of the major focus across Britain of improving housing conditions in British cities as well as providing affordable housing for workers from the growing car industry.

The smaller part of the estate was built in the mid-1990s as an additional development on the south of the existing estate. The Leys was built as a social housing estate and despite recent government and local initiatives to promote home ownership 50% of households still rent their property from Oxford City Council or from a housing association. Another third own their home although this number is declining. The area has a significant population which, according to the 2011 census, numbers 13,680 residents which represents an area that is experiencing little overall population growth - unlike other parts of the city - over the last decade. The area has seen a substantial increase in ethnic diversity since 2001 with 33% of the residents being from a non-white British ethnic group a 15% increase over the decade. The Leys has a large proportion of residents from Black ethnic groups with 12% of the population compared to 5% for the city as a whole.

The main facilities on the estate are located on Blackbird Leys Road. This includes the Community Centre, Leys Linx, the Credit Union, the Community Church, library, the Agnes Smith Advice Centre and a campus of Oxford City College, the Sports Centre and the Blackbird Pub. There are also a small number of shops in this area including a bakery, a betting shop, a general store, a takeaway and a pharmacy. Half a mile to the south, down Windale Avenue, lies the beginning of Greater Leys which has a number of relatively recent, purpose built social and community spaces including The Farmhouse, the Dovecote and the Clockhouse all of which are used for a multiplicity of community, recreational and educational activities. There is a further small supermarket at the bottom of Windale Avenue. These relatively sparse facilities are indicative of the situation on the estate in terms of access to a range of services, resources and retail



opportunities and receive significant comment from participants in this study. Seldom considered in the following way the combined population of the estate of around 13,500 makes the estate the equivalent of a middle-sized Oxfordshire town as the following table demonstrates. As table Two demonstrates Blackbird and Greater Leys contains a population significantly in excess of notable the Oxfordshire towns of, for example, Henley-on-Thames and Thame.

**Table Two – Towns by Population in Oxfordshire and the Leys in comparison.**

<b>Towns</b>	<b>Population</b>
Burford	1,878
Watlington	2,900
Woodstock	2,924
Charlbury	2,984
Faringdon	5,600
Chipping Norton	5,972
Wallingford	6,496
Wantage	9,767
Henley-on-Thames	10,646
Thame	10,886
<b>Blackbird and Greater Leys</b>	<b>13,680</b>
Caterton	20,120
Witney	22,765
Didcot	25,321
Bicester	26,672
Abingdon	36,000
Banbury	41,802
Oxford	155,000

### **5.5.1. Total Population and Age Structure.**

As stated above the size of the population of the Leys is relatively static at a total of 13,680 representing a growth of 872 since the 2001 census. This is made up of 6,220 males and 6,848 females. The age structure of the area demonstrates that it has a relatively young population with 30% of residents are under 18 and a further 40% aged 18-44 with 19% aged 45-64 and 11% aged 65 or over. There are 5,100 households living in the Leys and nearly 1 in 5 of these households is headed by a lone parent which is twice the average across the city.

### **5.5.2 Ethnicity.**

The estate is ethnically diverse with 33% (compared to 36% for the city as a whole) of the population from a non-White British ethnic group compared to 18% in 2001. The population is composed of 67% White British (a decline of 1,304 individuals since 2001), 12% Black, 8% Other White, 6% Mixed, 4% South Asian, 2% Chinese and Other 1%. Apart from the 12% Black these figures are very similar to the overall ethnic profile of the city as a whole. 20% of residents were born outside of the UK (10% for the city as a whole). Of these 13% arrived in the UK between 1951 and 1970 and 57% arrived after 2001. 74% of people whose main language is not English report being able to speak English well or very well and 2% report not being able to speak English at all.

### **5.5.3 Housing Tenure and Type.**

As noted the Leys was originally built as a social housing estate and renting from the City Council or Housing Association remains high at 50%. 33% own their own home but this number is in decline with 593 less owner-occupiers on the estate than in 2001. 11% are renting from private landlords. 41% of household spaces are terraced houses, 27% are semi-detached houses and 26% are purpose built flats. Only 5% of household types are detached

and only 1% are converted house flats (well below the city average for this kind of accommodation). Average household size is 2.6 persons per household compared with 2.5 in 2001 and a city average of 2.4. 3% of households are officially categorised as overcrowded.

#### **5.5.4. Qualifications.**

The levels of formal educational attainment and qualifications of people on the estate are poor in comparison to city and national averages. Although the state school system across the city (there are six state funded secondary schools all of which either are or will shortly become academies) underperforms against national targets with only 47% of students achieving 5 A\*- C at GCSEs between 2009-12<sup>29</sup> only 28% of students from the Leys achieve this target. In all 50% of the residents of the Leys have either low or no formal qualifications which is more than twice the city average of 22%. 31% of residents have no qualifications at all, 20% have less than 5 GCSEs A\*-C and only 15% have 5 GCSEs A\* - C. 16% have a degree or higher compared to 43% as the city average<sup>30</sup>.

#### **5.5.5 Economic Activity.**

Data on economic activity across the 16 - 74 year old population (excluding full-time students) on the estate is another indicator that compares less favourably with the average across the city. 42% of residents are in full-time employment compared to the city average of 50%, and 18% are in part-time employment compared to the city average of 15%. 8% of the population is unemployed (twice the city average) and 10% are long-term sick or disabled or otherwise economically inactive compared with the city average of 7%. 11% of the population are retired (10% is the city average).

#### **5.5.6 Working Age Benefits.**

---

<sup>30</sup> The figures relate to residents 16 or older and refer to an individual's highest qualification.

The number of people aged between 16 and 64 years old in receipt of working age benefits is significantly higher than the city average with 17.8 % in receipt of some form of out of work benefit whereas the average for the city is 7.4%. In terms of unemployment although the number of individuals claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) has fallen back from the peak of 258 in 2009 to 159 in October 2013 this represents almost three times the city average at 5.2% of the population. 8.6% of residents are in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Incapacity Benefit (IB)<sup>31</sup>, 1.7% are registered careers and 1.3% are registered disabled. 3.8% of people under 25 are in receipt of some form of working age benefit which is three times the city average.

## **5.6 Conclusion.**

This chapter has explored some of the ways in which the Leys has been negatively viewed and represented by local and national media as well as outlining aspects of the wider Oxford social and economic contexts. In the next chapter I present an analysis of the data generated through the semi-structured qualitative interviews I conducted with residents from the estate during my fieldwork which explores how residents themselves report on how the estate and those who live there are seen by others.

## **Chapter Six: ‘It’s Like a Story of Hope in a Damned Environment.’**

I mean, the general reaction of people when I tell them I’m from the Leys is sort of almost fear I suppose, from people, unless they’re from sort of Barton, Rose Hill, one of the other estates or anything. (Will).

### **6.1. Introduction.**

In chapter four I explored how notions of community are constructed within and through critical readings of New Labour’s policy approaches to urban regeneration, neighbourhood renewal and social exclusion. In chapter five I explored some of the ways in which the Leys has been negatively viewed and represented by local and national media as well as outlining aspects of the wider Oxford social and economic contexts. In the next three chapters I present an analysis of the data generated through the semi-structured qualitative interviews I conducted with residents from the estate during my fieldwork. As noted in chapter one, these three chapters are an attempt to pay serious attention, in Back’s terms (2007) to the views of those who are often the ‘targets’ of policy interventions and the discourses that attend these. My aim throughout the fieldwork was to engage residents in discussions about their views and experiences of the living on the estate, their experiences of how they and the estate are ‘othered’ by non-residents from other parts of the city, their sense of the estate as a community and what community means to them. I also wanted to explore what participants saw as the strengths and weaknesses of the estate and how they perceived external agencies and authority responses to respond to the estate as well as those who live there. These chapters attempt to foreground data that can be compared with the official views of ‘poor’ communities and those who lived in them as articulated through New Labour (amongst others) policy discourses. Put simply, I wanted to ask the residents of the estates what they thought were the main characteristics of where they lived, what did they think were

the main issues that they and their neighbours faced and how best could these be addressed.

The data reported in the chapter demonstrates that residents detect a high level of both actual and perceived negative attitudes, to the area they live in. Anger, resentment and irritation are also expressed about these attitudes, as they are seen as unfair, unjustified and prejudicial. Some of the participants demonstrate a reflexive understanding and perceptions of the issues that may underpin the attitudes of others and offer a range of insights into the social processes that they see at work here. The chapter begins with a series of reflections from residents on the reputation of the Leys and, in particular, how they see the estates as viewed by ‘outsiders’. The chapter reports on how residents of the estates talk about this reputation and how they perceive this reputation impacts on them, their life chances and their community.

For me, one of the most striking findings from the study has been that throughout the fieldwork conducted for this project participants consistently talked about the impact of the persistent and cumulative impact of these negative representations; on themselves, their experiences and more broadly on what they see as their wider life chances (for example, education, work, relationships, connectivity with the wider city). My analysis revealed some important and nuanced reflections on the representations of the estate and those that live there. Participants frequently present sophisticated accounts of a multi-level and interwoven set of discourses, time-lines (both real and imagined) and how these not only impact on them and their community but how they contribute to the overall structuring of relationships between the estate and other parts of the city and, in particular, with the availability and quality of service provision and the distribution of local and national resources.

Because of the specific significance of one set of repeated representations of the estate – the ‘riots’ of autumn 1991- I take a particular focus on the public disorder associated with the period of high-profile (in terms of local and national media coverage and academic

commentary) joy-riding or ‘hotting’ as it was known locally in 1991 and I explore how these events appear to hold a symbolic importance (both locally and nationally) that is far greater than the ‘reality’ of the events that reportedly occurred during the late summer of 1991. Due to the timing of these events (they took place at the same time as apparently similar series of disturbances in a number of other cities across Britain) they have become woven into a broader set of national narratives about a set of riots and public disorders that occurred in certain other English cities in the early 1990s (Campbell, 1993, Lavery, 1997, Mulghan, 1996, Power and Tunstall, 1997). Interestingly, perhaps, these events were spontaneously referred to in most of the interviews and, appear, to occupy a highly significant place within local understandings and the structuring of those understandings of Blackbird and Greater Leys, both for those who live there and for those who do not. However, depending on where you look, who you speak to or what you read the ‘reality’ of what happened in 1991 is very much disputed. It seems that all too readily disparate and unrelated events that take place in one geographical area can become very much confused with other events in different areas. Or perhaps become part of an amalgam or even imaginary of more generally reported and remembered events which can then be mobilised either locally, nationally or perhaps even personally to constitute a suitable and necessarily selective narrative of events.

The chapter is organised into a series of sub-sections through which I explore the different ways in which discourses about the estates are perceived and reflected upon by those who live there and how these discourses interrelate with each other. In the final section of the chapter I examine how these various discourses reflect wider discourses about and attitudes to council estates and how discourses of this type may contribute to issues of wider concern, such as social and economic class divisions, notions of and attitudes to crime, disorder, anti-social behaviour and ‘risk’ (in relation to Britain’s ‘dangerous places’ (Campbell, 1993)) and the role of large areas of concentrated urban housing as key signifiers

in social, political and policy discourse.

## **6.2. The Leys: Reflections on the General Reputation.**

At the start of each interview I asked each participant to comment on what they thought people who did not live on the estate thought about the estate and those who lived there. The strength of feeling varied across the sample (from extreme anger to resigned irritation) but all participants, irrespective of age, gender, ethnicity or length of time of residence, reported that they felt that the estate, and particularly the name of Blackbird Leys, had a very poor reputation that was persistent, unfair and inaccurate. For example:

I think the city is coloured by Blackbird Leys as a dreadful place, and no we won't go up there thank you. That's my feeling. I think it still has a very bad reputation. (Martha).

Participants often indicated their awareness of the 'infamous' status and used reported speech in recounting the views they perceived others hold of the area;

That's the Blackbird Leys. As soon as you say Blackbird Leys people are like 'ooh'. It seems to be kind of quite a wide perception. (Ella).

The cumulative effect has been to create a reputation that proves difficult to challenge and is seen by this resident as a permanent, if inaccurate, marker of the estates status;

Blackbird Leys has that reputation that hangs round its neck. And I think it's a very great pity, because I don't think it's, it may once have been deserved, I really don't think it is now. I feel rather strongly about it actually. (Jack).



These findings echo those of other similar studies (Barke and Turnbull, 1992; Damer, 1989; Dean and Hastings, 2003; Hastings and Dean, 2003; Hastings, 2004; Jensen and Christian, 2012; Reynolds, 1986; Rogaly and Taylor, 2011). For example, Rogaly and Taylor's (2011) study of the Larkman estate in Norwich reports that from at least the 1950s this estate had become associated with family breakdown, violence and criminality and participants in their study articulate similar notions of the negative reputation:

If someone says the Larkman, 'Oh, she lives over the Larkman, she comes from the Larkman,' that engenders a very particular response from people in Norwich .... even people who come from what I could consider other big council estates' (Lorna, in Rogaly and Taylor, 2011: 2).

In similar ways Jensen and Christensen's (2012) study of 'territorial stigmatisation' on a social housing estate, Alborg East, Denmark, notes how when contacting potential participants they would often assume that the purpose of the research was to explore how negative the area was. The authors argue that residents from areas that experience territorial stigmatisation are fully aware of the negative images of the areas they live in and of how these images inform and influence what outsiders find relevant about these areas and those who live there.

For participants in this study these type of negative attitudes reflect not just a set of misconceptions or poor judgements but a detrimental and profound ignorance throughout the rest of the city '... there is an abysmal ignorance of Blackbird Leys in much of Oxford. And I do mean abysmal.' (Joel). A view also reflected in comments from others.

It hasn't got a very good reputation within the rest of Oxford. And there are a lot of things that people believe about this estate which aren't true, and a lot of things which people don't believe which are true. That's how I'd summarise it really. (Jan).

The notion that people who do not live on the Leys are genuinely ignorant of the area is a strong motif that comes across in many of the interviews and participants frequently drew attention to the fact that, from their experience, people from other parts of Oxford either knew too little that was accurate or important about the estate and believed too much that was inaccurate or irrelevant. This includes mistaken notions of the immediate geography of the estate and the incidence of serious crime and disorder.

I think they (people who live in other parts of Oxford) think it's [um] a crowded slum, or a forest of high rise towers.<sup>32</sup> Neither of which is even remotely near the truth. I think they think it's a crime hotspot and a dangerous area. I'm very sure they think it's a dangerous area. Which it absolutely is not. I think the best way to judge that is by statistics, and I think the statistics show it's neither dangerous nor a crime hotspot. But yes, there is that ignorance. It's partly the geography that Blackbird Leys is out on the periphery and there are no through roads. It's conveniently out of the way. (Mike).

The notion of the Leys as 'on the periphery' is reflected throughout the data and this extends beyond a product of geographical location to one which, participants report, includes non-geographical aspects such as being on the periphery of the rest of the city's identity, concerns, 'successes' and life. In some cases those seen as responsible for perpetuating negative representations of the estates and, indeed, acting in accordance with those

---

<sup>32</sup> There are two.

perceptions are identified as being from the wealthiest and most socially exclusive (but also, supposedly, the most intellectually and politically liberal) area of Oxford - Summertown or more generally North Oxford.

It's a positive place up here. I mean I could tell you of instances. I shouldn't name names, but a group was sort of invited to come and tell stories, and they said oh no, it's not safe on Blackbird Leys, so they didn't get an invitation. But that sort of publicity is just totally unnecessary. I needn't tell you that it was a North Oxford group, and I've had lots of people say to me, why on earth do you want to live up there? It's not safe. You need to move. Ach, it's no less safe up here, then it is up the High or down Cornmarket at any hour of the day or night, and I think collectively we rather resent that kind of treatment, and its time it was stopped. It's a hangover from the period when the estate was in trouble, but it's pulled itself a long, long way. And it's going on upwards, as far as I can see. (Liz).

Both Mike and Liz emphasise the inaccuracies within the strongly held negative views others have about the Leys. They both describe how negative representations, especially those focused on the 'dangers', 'risk' and levels of crime not only fail to compare with their own day-to-day lived experiences of the area but also do not correlate with official (police and local authority) data on crime, disorder and safety. Furthermore, participants readily demonstrate both a personal resentment of these attitudes and behaviours and a critical awareness of how such attitudes can continue to sustain negative and detrimental discourses and representations of the estates across the city and beyond.

Discussion about the relationship between the Leys and the rest of the city is often (as can be seen in the extracts above and in others later in this chapter) refocused into a specific

commentary on divisions and differences between the east (in this case the area in and around the Leys and outside the ring-road) and the north (particularly Summertown and the surrounding area inside the ring-road) of the city. There are several examples of this refocusing in the data and it suggests a form of political narrative that reflects a number of actual differences in affluence and life chances as well as attitudes and values (Director of Public Health, Oxfordshire, 2007). In relation to the issues raised and discussed in Chapter Five it is important to raise the connections between these discourses and reflections at the local level and the wider discourses identified in the policy analysis. In some ways, it might be argued, that the ‘macro’ issues that are seen to characterise general divisions between different geographic areas, in terms of social and economic ‘well-being’ – for example, income, life-expectancy, health inequalities, educational attainment and other indices of deprivation all of which can be evidenced and detailed through readily available data – find reflection in the ‘micro’ politics of north and east Oxford or, in particular the differences between those who live outside and those who live inside the ‘ringroad.’

These types of comments readily draw to mind Cohen’s notion of how community is best understood as a relational idea and is often found ‘... in the opposition of one community to others or to other social entities’ (1985:12). For Cohen the use of the word community is only occasioned by the desire or need to express such a distinction and this way of thinking about the idea of community leads to a focus on what he sees as the space which embodies a sense of discrimination or, in his words, ‘the boundary’(1985: 12). The boundary ‘encapsulates’ the identity of the community and ‘... is called into being by the exigencies of social interaction.’ (1985:12). As mentioned in chapter three, Cohen also notes that whilst that there are objective markers of boundaries, for example, statutory, legal, physical, racial or linguistic some of the components of any boundary are not so objectively apparent and can be thought of as ‘existing in the minds of their beholders’ (1985:12). The repeated and

deliberate act of comparing the Leys to the more affluent North Oxford is a reflection of the importance of both symbolic and physical boundaries and provides an example of how the meaning of community is as much bounded by conceptions of what it is *not* or what it is *not like* than of what it is. Cohen's argues that it is both the meanings that people express about the existence and nature of the 'boundary' and the symbolic aspects of community boundaries that are crucial to understanding the importance of community in people's minds are particularly relevant here. Importantly, for Cohen symbols not only represent or stand for 'something else' but they also allow individuals to supply some of their meaning. I think this conception of communities and their symbolic boundaries reminds us that the creation of ideas of communities requires active participation in the creation of that meaning on both or rather all sides of the 'boundaries'.

As a symbol, it is held in common by its members; but its meaning varies with its members' unique orientations to it. In the face of this variability of meaning, the consciousness of community has to be kept alive through the manipulation of its symbols. The reality and efficacy of the community's boundary – and, therefore, of the community itself – depends on its symbolic construction and embellishment.

(Cohen, 1985:15).

As can be seen and will be further illustrated throughout this chapter the 'boundaries', both physical and symbolic, are clearly seen as important to participants and they frequently form part of the narratives generated in the interviews. We shall return to this part of the discussion later.

### **6.3 Media Representations**

Participants tended to blame local and national media for negative perceptions of the estate. The following extracts illustrate a direct misrepresentation of the estate:

... it's got a very bad image in the media, but I just think if you ask people who come here and spend time here and whatever usually they change their mind about that. (Mags).

If Blackbird Leys is in the newspaper it might be about something negative or about...well, it's usually crime. Someone did something to someone else. A mailman has attacked so and so. Have you any further news. Something like Oxford United afterwards a fight broke out. Even if they weren't from Blackbird Leys they might say they were from Blackbird Leys and everyone knows that they weren't and I just feel like it's a good area for a scapegoat. (Les).

You'll hear about something fantastic that's happened in Botley,<sup>33</sup> or you'll hear of something fantastic in like Farmoor or Cumnor<sup>34</sup> places that are barely even in Oxford. And you hear about all those brilliant schools and such and I feel like Blackbird Leys is so unrepresented when it comes to newspapers. (Tina).

Both Les and Tina highlight how the focus of media coverage tends to be on negative events relating to Blackbird Leys to the extent that positive events that are newsworthy in other parts of the city are ignored and there is even some embellishment in the coverage. As Peter says, 'It's a good area for a scapegoat'.

---

<sup>33</sup> West Oxford.

<sup>34</sup> Rural villages located to the West of Oxford just outside the City boundary.

While much of the criticism was levelled at the local media in the form of, in particular, *The Oxford Mail* and local radio and television coverage others noted the role of national and even international reporting of the estate.

Blackbird Leys isn't too sort of, well liked I suppose the stabbings that are always reported in the *Oxford Mail*, or front page or whatever. So I think it is quite may be a negative press aspect I think. (Rosie).

For one participant the local media are guilty of taking a very partial focus when reporting on Oxford which results in some areas being depicted in a disproportionately negative way, while overlooking serious issues in other parts of the city, and resulting in a constant form of degradation for the Leys and its residents.

I think if they were to look at the City as a whole, there is much going on elsewhere as there is going on here. But hey ho, you know, we just get whipped every week in the press. (Rachel).

If positive stories do make it to the media they are characteristically couched in terms of a form of exceptional achievement despite of all the 'issues' on the estate and all the factors that mitigate against anything positive happening on the Leys. Martha casts this approach in a Dantesque image that demonstrates their frustration at this type of news coverage:

I mean you do get, you get the occasional sort of good story, but then the way it's presented, it's kind of like a story of hope in the damned environment kind of thing. (Martha).

Although the media attracted general criticism for the way they report on and characterise the estate there is one set of events and the specific media coverage that it received which I discuss in the next section: The ‘hotting’ incidents of late summer 1991.

#### **6.4. “Hotting”, The Leys and the National Media Coverage.**

Between September 1-4th 1991 Blackbird Leys was the setting for a series of public disorder incidents involving residents of the estate and the Thames Valley Police. These events were initially sparked by police attempts to bring to an end the use of high-performance cars in staged races and on-street performances (for example, ‘doughnuts’) by young males on the estate in a practice that came to be known as ‘hotting’. The actuality of what happened during that week is disputed by residents of the estate with many being highly dismissive of the notion that the period witnessed serious public disorder. One participant, Joel, who lived there at the time referred to ‘oh, the famous riots that never were’.

Although, as we have seen, the poor reputation of the Leys predates the events of September, 1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup>, 1991, the series of incidents that took place over these four days and the way they were reported in the media occupy a special significance in the ongoing creation and reinforcement of the area’s reputation. They appear to act as a form of definitional marker for the estate, not just in reference to the specific events of 1991 but up to the present day. All participants made direct and often extensive reference to this period whether or not they lived on the estate or were even born at the time, using terms such as ‘a marker’, ‘a myth’ and a ‘fiction’ when discussing this period. Participants also saw the media’s coverage of the events and their repeated preparedness to use this era, and footage produced at the time, as filler when reporting on the area as a major contribution to the persistence of the estate’s poor reputation and the ignorance of many outsiders. The following extract highlights



how Joel saw this period as leaving a legacy of stigmatisation with long-term impacts on the residents and especially younger residents.

This has been a notorious estate in this town. [er] It's not the worse by any stretch, but if you lived in another area of Oxford and said, "Oh Blackbird Leys." They instantly think of the years of the joy riders. So we've always had that, we've always had that over our head. And it's been reflected in the fact that the kids of ten, fifteen years ago have probably grown up with that feeling of being second rate to everybody else and they've treated the estate accordingly. (Joel)

Another participant highlighted how the media coverage of the estate in the early 1990s made national news and helped generate a sustained negative image of the estate.

I think they've [the media] got a terrible impression of it. And I do believe perhaps not so much Greater Leys but certainly going back to 1993 I think it was when Blackbird Leys was on the national news with the racing that was going on. And I think people still, as soon as you mention Blackbird Leys, still remember, that oh my gosh that awful place. (Charles).

In the above quote the participant inaccurately identifies the events as taking place in 1993. In the next extract Ulla (who did not live on the estate in the 1980s or 1990s) locates the 'hotting' as taking place in the 1980s while contrasting the resulting negative perceptions of the estate with the views of other residents.

The joy riding in the eighties when even Channel 4 and the national news was following that Blackbird Leys youths and the sort of disrespectful unruly car stealing rogues. And I think all the publicity it got from there, fueled this negative view of the estate. Because I've been talking to people who lived here for 50 years, you know, who came here and their parents worked in the car factory. They always say it was a lovely community. Very nice council estate to live on. So I think probably the real kind of honing in on the negatives probably started then. (Ulla).

In both cases the inaccurate chronological location of the 'hotting' episode provides evidence of both how powerful this reputational marker has been and how the repetition of images, narratives and coverage of the time blends, over time, into a more fluid but nevertheless definitional set of conceptions of how the estate is and has been 'othered'. Interestingly, Joel and Ulla's comments above do not excuse or deny that car theft and joy-riding were taking place during this period but that the sustained focus on this period has effectively erased other more positive narratives about the estate. For another participant, Mike, the way in which the media work, by recycling impactful images drawn from the film archives supports the continued reinforcement of the negative reputation of the estate while providing no narrative to outsiders of the reality of the estate or how things may have changed over time (For similar analysis see Dean and Hasting, 2000; Hastings and Dean 2003).

I think a lot of the media people tend to look back in their archives and... I mean the thing that always comes up and if you always see it on the television is the car doing the doughnuts, well before this was developed. This used to be quite a wide bit of road, and you always seen this car late at night doing the doughnuts and that goes back to

mid-90s and the joyriding. But whenever somebody mentions, whenever something comes up about Blackbird Leys and problems, they always show that bit and that isn't helping the area. If they spend more time in actually showing what's good about the area, then I think it would improve the way people think about where they live. (Mike).

As stated earlier, many residents dispute the reality and actuality of what happened in September 1991 and offer counter-narratives to both official and more informal records of that time. One popular belief is that the media conspired with either local youths or youths from outside the estate to stage these displays.

I suppose this particular area is always looked down upon from the more affluent parts of Oxford, because they have got more, I don't know pride in their area, yes, and this is to me classed as a, well as a low pride area because of the, I suppose, the crime rate which was 15 - 20 years ago quite bad with a lot of car crime. Now I think a lot of the car crime which I have been told that was filmed on the estate was actually set up by the television companies just to make a film, which enticed people onto the estate who wouldn't have come to cause the trouble. (Martha).

This counter narrative talked about visiting youths from Birmingham drawn to the estate by its layout and location along with a disproportionate police response.

It wasn't bad at all. It was just a few kids riding round and most of them were from Birmingham anyway, in stolen cars and they brought them down here, because we had long straight roads. And it was just blown out of proportion. The police went up there with riot shields and dogs and everything. It was just overkill. But they did nothing.

They just let them drive around they didn't stop them or anything. So it was almost like encouraging them. And then the media come along and it's like wow this is a show now. So they played up to it and they made it worse. (Jack).

A long-standing resident who lived on the estate from well before the 'hotting' and the associated public order issues was deeply critical of the historical reputation the estate has had since the early 1990s, maintaining that the occurrence of 'rioting' was more apparent than real.

The only real mass violence I saw in the whole of that episode was when a huge body of police suddenly turned up out here in three vans. There was no one else around, they just turned up. Jumped out of their vans with helmets and shields, ran down the road here, shouting and then ran back shouting, got into their vans and drove off. [laughs] Whether it was an exercise or what I don't know but ... in that whole sort of so called rioting period, that was the only sort of, the only thing that looked remotely like a riot. (Joel).

Finally in relation to this section one participant provided a beautifully insightful comparison of the plight of one 'motor-town' to another as she reported on the following intervention from her brother-in-law in the United States.

You know, we just get whipped every week in the press. You know, and it's awful because my brother-in-law lives in Detroit in America, which incidentally is the ash tray of America, but he does live in the best of Detroit, in his million dollar house. Anyway, he can access *Oxford Mail* online. So he calls us, and goes. "Not again. What

are you still living there for? It's a dump." You know, so it just worries me that people around, you know, if you are an ex-pat and you're somewhere else in the world thinking, God those poor people that live in Blackbird Leys, you know. (Rachel).

In a number of studies of housing estates many authors report not only on how the area is often stigmatised but also how residents express feelings of shame or similar feelings. For example Rogaly and Taylor report that many of their respondents spoke of their 'shame' of being from the Larkman estate. Other studies have also identified strong senses of 'shame' or reticence amongst their respondents regarding the area they come from (Jupp, 2013, Rogaly and Taylor, 2010, Watt, 2006). As we have seen, Wacquant argues that in response to 'spatial defamation' residents engage in strategies of mutual distancing and lateral denigration and they exit from the neighbourhood (2008b). Skeggs (1997) has identified what she sees as the process of disidentification through which individuals actively distance themselves from identity categories that are associated with low symbolic value. Warr (2005), has further developed this analysis by arguing that in the absence of positive narratives of place residents may adopt a strategy of 'aloofness' in their neighbourhood which further undermines the building of intra-area networks and inhibits mobilising the potential benefits of such networks. For Ruggiero (2007) the territorial stigmatisation of the 'ghetto' educates those who live there to devalue themselves. One might expect this notion of shame or distancing to apply to the specific period of 'hotting' on the Leys. Campbell's reading of the 'riots' of the early 1990s in areas such as Oxford, Cardiff and Newcastle very much fits with this approach with the act of car theft and joy-riding on the estate acting as a 'symbolic' degradation of the historical status of the area as a productive area of car manufacturing (Campbell, 1993). However, discussions of the estate's reputation suggest that participants did not appear to share these sentiments quite so obviously. While they appear to

be conscious of the ways in which the area and they themselves are systematically degraded through these processes, they do not appear to accept this presentation or to internalise these negative values and depictions. They do not talk about the 'shame' of living or being associated with the estate. However, as we have seen some participants did report adopting a strategy of concealing where they were from when applying for jobs as well as recognising that others from outside the estate look down at residents or can be nervous when meeting residents for the first time. But the discussions of the estate's reputation in general, and specifically the events of 1991, suggest resentment, annoyance and disappointment at how these events impact on people's views of the estate and those who live there. Furthermore, participants are dubious about the accuracy of the narratives (official and unofficial) that characterize this period as one of serious public disorder. They present counter narratives which accuse the media, police and others of both misrepresenting the events of 1991 and using them to perpetuate a particular (and negative) framing of the estate.

### **6.5 Negative Representations of the Estate and their Impact on Individuals.**

I have not lived somewhere before where there's been this thing about people look at your postcode or you say where you're from and they judge you. And it's quite hard. I never thought I succumb to the pressure of just saying oh yes, I live in Oxford. But sometimes I do. Because I just think stuff it why should I give you the chance to judge me, before you've even spoken to me? And just because of where I live. (Ella).

Living and working in an area of a city that has a relatively poor reputation is one thing. It does not, in and of itself, mean that people's lives are affected in an overly negative way or that such perceptions have any material effects or that individuals are disadvantaged by where they live (Atkinson and Kintrea, 2001, Buck, 2001, Howarth, 2002, Smith et al 2007, Warr et al., 2007). However, participants consistently provided examples of how the reputation of the area impacted on individual and collective life chances and on their day-to-

day experiences. This ranged from the feeling of being judged by place of residence to general attitudes about the intelligence and other personal and collective capacities of residents from the estates.

It's rough. Crime-ridden. [short pause] I don't know, probably they're people who live here aren't very intelligent. I would say that's probably most people's general opinion if they have got anything. (Will).

Will captures the negativity he feels others associated with the estate by suggesting it's probably most people's opinion if they have got anything. Another participant, Mags, cited the Chavtown website as an example of the ways in which the area is represented in some national coverage and the negative reinforcement they feel both affects the area and those who live there.

When I was at work the other day somebody was pointing out a web site, it's something about chavs and its say well you know, I'm surprised that nobody's nominated Blackbird Leys as the number one chav place in the whole of Britain or whatever. It's just wall-to-wall chavs. I've seen the website before and I just thought, phew. So it's that kind of, it's not just what individual people say, it's just constantly being re-enforced in the media. (Mags).

The 'chav' motif is a recurrent one that is often referred to in the interviews and the participants who mention it are clear that it is a negative and dismissive collective term for those who live on 'estates'. This chav discourse is also directly linked to the idea that the residents of the estate are irresponsible and are victims of self-inflicted difficulties that are

simply outcomes of their ignorance and irresponsible behaviours. Another participant was critical of how attempts by female residents to develop a business network for local women had attracted negative comments on the *Oxford Mail*'s website where one contributor to the website resorted to negative stereotyping to disparage this development:

We had an article about Women's Business Network. So I was looking in the Oxford Mail and I was looking at the article on the Oxford Mail website and the comments, and the only comments, actually I must get this comment removed was somebody saying, "Women's Business Network on Blackbird Leys. What's that about cutting up Charlie and making it go further?" (Liz).

This experience reflects the ways in which narratives and experiences of stigmatisation associated with poverty and marginalisation can be gendered in additionally problematic ways for women (Mann and Roseneil, 1994; Skeggs, 1997, 2004; Takahashi, et al., 2002; Vincent, et al., 2010). As one participant notes:

It ties in with that, that mindset that well you know, they're just chavs on Blackbird Leys what do you expect you know, we're probably doing it all to ourselves aren't we. I'm probably having chip butties every night, you know, my kids and whatever, you know. [laughs] (Tina).

Joking aside this reflection, that this woman feeds her children 'chip butties every night,' contains not only a sense of how some may see the estates and those who live there but also that in some senses the people who live in this area (along with those who live in similar areas elsewhere across the country<sup>0</sup>, bring many of their difficulties on to themselves



and, either through ignorance, stupidity or fecklessness, somehow deserve what they get or at least do not do enough to lift themselves out of the situations they find themselves in.

I think it's very hard living on benefits on Blackbird Leys because you've got a double negative coming against you there. You live on Blackbird Leys. You're on benefits. People on benefits are seen as sort of, as part, as almost like sort of sub citizens. You live on Blackbird Leys you're seen as almost a sub citizen. So you've got that and then it's very difficult. I know I'm qualified to say. (Sara).

Here Sara illustrates how specific social experiences and social categorisation can have double (or indeed multiple) impacts on residents where being on benefits and on the estate are seen as flawed in more ways than one. The negative reputation of the area is seen by some as the most significant barrier residents of the estate face in regard to their life chances.

The reputation definitely .... I would say that probably is the main barrier that people have, and the things that come from that reputation. (Geoff).

This reputational barrier can be seen as comprising of a set of assumptions that people who do not live on the estate hold about those from the estate:

You know, that if you're from Blackbird Leys then there can be assumptions about, oh you're probably sitting on benefits and you're a lazy so and so. So even if you do go for a job you might well have people stereotyping. (Jan).

One younger participant reported how she felt that this reputation was reinforced at school when she recounted her experiences of discussions about crime and different areas of the city during class:

I remember in Geography in Year 8 we were looking at crime and Quarry had more crime than Blackbird Leys at this point. But my teacher refused to talk about Quarry because he lived in Quarry and kept talking about Blackbird Leys and how run down it was, and how the people in Blackbird Leys had a reputation of committing crime. And I said, well if you look at the people who live on Quarry compared to Blackbird Leys and that Quarry seems to have more crime, what does that say about living in Quarry rather than Blackbird Leys when it seems to have more people, but there's less crime being committed? I think that's an unfair judgement to make. And not all people from Blackbird Leys commit crime. I've, lived in Blackbird Leys and never had a break-in, never had anything stolen. Most people I know in Cowley have had their cars broken into, had all sorts of issues, and when I've lived up on the estate, in both Blackbird Leys and Greater Leys there's never been an issue in my life or the people closely connected to or around me. Blackbird Leys, it's just where, its full of black people who like to commit crime, smoke weed, people who like to drop out of school. Single parents, the lowest of the low live in Blackbird Leys why do you want to go into Blackbird Leys? Oh it's disgusting. This, that and the other. People really have an assumption. (Iz).

For Iz the willingness by, in this case a teacher, others to ignore the available information about the crime and other indicators in other parts of the city is, in part, explained by an unwillingness to see beyond the stereotypes of the Leys, but also she attributes it to the

fact that too many individuals (such as this teacher) never go to the Leys or meet people from it. Despite this lack of actual experience and knowledge of the estate non-residents, be they professionals or lay people, appear to be perfectly content to engage in a form of symbolic violence that has significant repercussions for residents. It also demonstrates how embedded local reputations, stereotypes and spatial mythologies can be and how they may be transmitted or at least re-emphasised through schooling and other primary socialisation experiences.

I'm not even aware of how this sort of assumption has developed, things have just gathered up. Maybe it's the people they've met from Blackbird Leys. I think it's more a case of 'oh I wouldn't go to Blackbird Leys. Like the people from Blackbird Leys are quite ballsy, quite loud, been known as a ghetto. It's like, oh for goodness' sake. And they're seen as sort of disruptive. Not really respecting the area. I just don't even understand where the stereotype has come from. (Susan).

The focus by outsiders on the behaviour of residents – characterised here by Susan as 'ballsy, quite loud' - not only invokes Hanley's (2007) comments on how residents of estates are perceived by outsiders but also how differences in social practices and behaviours can work to stratify and define individuals. In this case how the notions of 'taste' (Bourdieu, 1990), social and cultural practices (Skeggs, 1997, 2004), personhood, value and class (Skeggs, 2011; Skeggs and Loveday, 2012) work to create hierarchies of social and personal value that have significant impacts on people's lives (Lawler, 2002, 2004, 2005).

For a number of participants the impact of these stereotypes and prejudices compound further difficulties of gaining employment as, thrown into the mix of high levels of

unemployment and insecure work, is the impact of what one participant terms a 'postcode lottery'. Some participants felt that when applying for jobs they are not judged on their credentials, their abilities and their experience but rather their address and its reputation.

I know when I put on a CV where I live I don't put Blackbird Leys or Greater Leys, because I know there's a reputation. Unless I'm applying for a job really close by, like say Cowley Centre or the Retail Park. I won't put I live on Blackbird Leys or Greater Leys, I put this specific area or the roads, like a certain close, like the close I live in. I won't put I lived in Blackbird Leys because I know that when they look at that they're going to think okay. She lives in Blackbird Leys, she might be that kind of person. Which is a shame because I know what kind of person they're talking about and it's like well if you just scroll round to grades, but even then, that's not enough. I have to put this specific area I live in, and then put the postcode but when they'll see I live in OX4 that's enough because that could be Cowley, that could be Iffley, that could be anywhere. (Ella).

In addition to Ella recounting the limitations that having a Blackbird Leys address may have on employment prospects she is also keen to highlight how she understands that there are individuals on the estate that might well fit the reputational assumptions held by outsiders. Ella's comments here reflect the ways in which residents of any given estate will themselves seek to draw distinctions between themselves and less 'respectable' members of the community (Skeggs, 2004; 2011; Skeggs and Loveday, 2012; Van Eijk, 2012; Vincent et. al., 2010; Warr, 2005, 2006). Ella's comments demonstrate that while she acknowledges that there may well be some less respectable residents (who lack, for example, good educational attainment) she also maintains that employers assume that all residents of the

area are like this and do not look beyond the address to see what actual skills and abilities individuals have.

If you're applying for somewhere really locally then you will because it shows how close by you live, but if not you really just, you really don't put that you live necessarily in Blackbird Leys. Just because it doesn't have the same ... it doesn't seem to get that sort of welcoming than if you've you said you lived in Headington. Like it's the same for people in Barton, you don't put Barton unless you know they employ people from Barton, you put Headington instead. (Ella).

Ella discusses the strategy of deliberate vagueness she employs when job seeking. Adopting what might be termed a strategy of spatial coverage or deflection, of not 'outing' oneself as a resident of the Leys recalls Goffman's notion of 'passing' as a conscious response to the experience of stigma (Goffman, 1963). Furthermore, it is not a consideration that residents of more affluent and certainly non-stigmatised areas of the city (for example, any area within the ring-road) have to make when applying for a job or stating where they live. In fact, it is often quite the reverse when being from Summertown, Headington or Jericho are locations that are often viewed with envy and as places to live.

## **6.6 Attitudes of 'outsiders and visitors'.**

It's quite simple, the first visitor I had, hadn't absorbed the fact that I lived on Blackbird Leys because I didn't put it in the address. It's redundant. And she said to me as she was leaving, "Where's Blackbird Leys?" And I said, "Well Anne, you're on it." "Oh, oh this is the awful Blackbird Leys is it?" And she was a prison officer. (Martha).

This extract captures how ideas about the estate and those who live there, its reputation and attendant prejudices and negative attitudes are readily mapped in the comments, views and behaviours of ‘outsiders’ in their perceptions of the estate and their interactions with residents. All participants reported firsthand examples of how friends, visitors and even family members often voiced expressions of anxieties and fear – related to personal safety – about visiting or potentially visiting the estate. Ulla described how this can impact on something as everyday as getting their hair done:

They think that if they come here they’re probably going to get mugged. Or what do you call it when the car, jack-knifing (car-jacked). Yes, because I had a friend that was a hairdresser, that she was worried about coming to do my hair, when I moved here, because she felt that if she had to stop at a Give Way Junction somebody might jump in and grab the car off of her. (Ulla).

Another participant also suggested that the reputation and perception of the estate can deter non-residents from coming to the estate to participate in social activities.

You know, if something is reported about the Leys often it’s negative. It focuses on the negative. People often focus on the negative. You know, people who come in and want consultations often focus on the negative and not on the positive sides of it. I feel completely safe in this community, like I go out in the night and have no problems with it, but someone came, may be around 7.30 and obviously it was dark, an adult woman, a young woman who wanted to come to a dance class and was looking around and couldn’t find it, and I explained where it was. And after a while she said, “Oh you know, it’s oh so dark here, I don’t think I will come back here.” (Jan).

Jan not only notes the impact of a poor reputation on the willingness of non-residents to visit the estate and participate in events there but she also highlights how others (often in the guise of researchers undertaking community consultations) focus on negative aspects of the estate to the exclusion of consideration of any positive aspects of the area and those who live there. This provides another example of the way in which the area is seen through a deficit lens by various organisations such as the local media who, as we saw earlier in this chapter, prefer to focus on negative aspects of life on the estate rather than other more positive aspects.

Within discussions around this issue there was a sense that the area is seen as some kind of ‘outland’ that should not be visited, that is to be deliberately avoided. Ella recalled how this impacted on celebrating her birthday during a hot-air balloon flight:

I often, quite regularly come across people who say ‘Oh no, I never go up there. Why would I want to go out there?’ I went for a balloon flight once on my fortieth birthday and the man, the pilot of the balloon apologised when here realised we were coming over to Blackbird Leys, which was really funny actually because I was so pleased, right, I just thought it was fantastic. And in fact we ended up going right over my house. I mean what are the chances of that. And I saw my friends, my neighbours, and he really enjoyed it in the end, because we were waving, and you know, shouting hello to people and it was great fun. (Ella).

Notwithstanding the enjoyment Ella eventually experienced on this balloon flight the response of the balloon pilot borders on the extreme. To apologise for failing to avoid a geographical area of the city suggests a remarkable depth of revulsion and fear.

## **6.7 Official Responses**

When people from Oxford City Council come and sort of look at the community centre and say the only thing we can do really is to pull it down and put on a supermarket for the people here, then I think it's absolutely awful, and ignorant, and treating people like second class. (Les).

Discussion with participants about what might be termed official responses<sup>35</sup> to the Leys and those who live there are characterised by a sense that little, if any, 'good' can derive from the area. That, to some extent, the area and those who live there are a kind of write-off which, at best, can only be contained and managed, usually at arm's length. It seems that official, lay and media perceptions and discourses all contribute to both the construction and reinforcement of these negative narratives. As Les notes the perception of the City Council's attitude is one in which local people are seen as 'second class'. For others, this view manifests as a kind of civic unworthiness associated with high levels of non-participation (in, for example, Council-led or sponsored initiatives) and apathy.

There used to be a residents' association. It folded after a while. The City Council's trying to get up a similar sort of thing now. I mean people just; I think there's a perception that people on Blackbird Leys are apathetic. But I think that's [er] a very general term that fails to sort of look at some of the issues that are underneath it as to why people don't appear to be getting involved in the way that may be statutory organisations would like them to be getting involved. I mean, you'll know yourself, there's been so many different projects come and go on Blackbird Leys [er] and when, you know, when they're here with all the money, yes, it might do something for a little

---

<sup>35</sup> By this I mean individuals and organisations from the statutory sector and other organisations that have a formal role in delivering services to the public.



bit. It might not. When they're gone, they're gone. And there's not much to show for them. I don't believe I just said that. But it's true unfortunately. (Les).

Les's comments reflect a more complex situation that rejects the charge of apathy and suggests that reasons for not engaging with statutory organisations is an outcome of what residents see as a set of repetitive, short-term interventions which lack sustained and meaningful engagement with residents and achieve little for the community but benefit a handful of people and meet some immediate objectives of the statutory agencies involved. (See also McCulloch (1997) for a reflection on how statutory interventions can seemingly work against the community in its widest sense).

Other participants describe how they felt professionals tended to talk down the estate and its residents by applying generalised and stereotypical views to all the residents on the estates, belying a lack of understanding of the estate created by a professional, socio-economic and geographical distance.

I was at a meeting a few years back, and the Public Health Director of the County Council was there. It was a joint meeting with the Primary Care Trust and the County Council. It was actually held at the leisure centre on Blackbird Leys and he was going on and on and on about this area. And I finally stood up and I said, "I actually am a resident." And I was on his workforce at the time, and he didn't know because he lives in leafy Summertown and it's all very beautiful in his two million quid house. (Tina).

Where individuals had direct experience of developing their own initiatives and events on the estate they often reported being met with scepticism and reticence from external agencies who expressed doubt about the ability of the estate's residents to contribute positively to their environment. In the following extract, Rachel talks about her (and other

residents) participation an initiative organised by the Oxfordshire Art Weeks Programme<sup>36</sup> and how this cultural intervention was viewed by some members of the organising committee, the local paper, the parish council and the City Council:

... so I started up an art group with four, three other artists called Blackbird Leys art group. BLAG. So we did the first art week's exhibition that they had on the Leys, which for a starters was about the thing with the art week's committee like ugh Blackbird Leys Art Exhibition? Oh really. A bit of contradiction in terms. Actually some of them were really lovely. But in the *Oxford Mail* we had a real fight with them about giving us positive coverage. That we were trying to do something positive. When we did the project that got the Glow Tree sculpture put up there which I see now is mentioned in lots of sort of reports, you know, from the City Council or whatever. You know, at the time we were told; "What on earth were we doing trying to get a sculpture put up in Blackbird Leys? Don't you know it'll get vandalised? What a stupid idea. You know, Blackbird Leys. "We don't have those sort of things on Blackbird Leys." That was the parish council that told us, and we were like "No way, you know, why shouldn't we have nice things all of us here? Are you saying that because we live in a socio-economically disadvantaged area we don't deserve nice things and nice environment?" And look at Glow Tree's sculpture now it's a really accepted part, you know, nobody's vandalised it. That's not saying they never will, but it hasn't been, you know, it's really loved and respected that. And why not? It's a beautiful thing. (Rachel).

This reflection again demonstrates official perceptions of the estate and the resistance to recognising the skills, achievements and potential of the estate's residents. The assumption

---

<sup>36</sup> For more information on this event see [www.artweeks.org](http://www.artweeks.org).

that ‘we don’t have those sort of things on the Leys’ and commitment to the notion that artistic creativity (in this case) is inevitably doomed summarises many of the prejudicial attitudes residents face. This extract also underlines the view that the estate and residents are undeserving of ‘nice things’ and of ‘a nice environment’ and that they are somehow attitudinally unsuited to the sort of cultural events that are an everyday and unexceptional aspect of life in the rest of the City. The residents ‘fail’ in two ways: not only do the residents of the Leys lack creativity of their own they are also underserving of such creativity unlike other areas of the city.

### **6.8 Drugs and Drug Dealing.**

One issue that did come up on a number of occasions was that of drugs and drug dealing on the estate. When asked what the worst thing about the area was Mags replied:

The drugs. I don’t like the fact that, for example, at one point we had a crack dealer living up my road and I can’t tell you how horrible that is. You know, sort of 9 o’clock in the morning on a Sunday one of my kids was playing outside and came running up. Mum, mum there’s a man with a knife trying to chase someone else. Screaming tyres and all that. It’s really horrible. (Mags).

As with Mags, Liz’s reflections on drug use on the estate are historically based. Having stated that she was not sure what the reality of drugs use on the estate was at the time she did report on an earlier experience:

...there was a time when there was a phone box where the heroin users would all line up, you could go past on your way to the Spar and they would obviously waiting for a call from whoever was dealing it. (Liz).

Another participant, Geoff, also reflected on the issue of drug dealing on the estate:

I mean there's a lot of people that sell drugs on the estate. But I don't know, well you do see, I suppose it's part of their way of life, I suppose, in a way. I wouldn't say it's necessarily a good or bad thing. I mean it is a good thing and a bad thing really. Because there are people that support their families from it, but then obviously, on the other hand, there's the victims of the crimes it causes and obviously for the users as well. (Geoff).

Geoff's position is interesting here and is highly nuanced. He recognises that in areas of economic deprivation drug dealing offers a source of income and support for some marginalised families. However, he also recognises that there are crimes associated with dealing and use and that the impact on addicts can be negative. Nevertheless, he is reluctant to define the drugs issue as either 'bad' or 'good' preferring to highlight how it is both at the same time.

Interestingly, another participant, Ulla, argued that the police and local authorities did not take as much action against drug dealers as they might. She argued that rather than take action the authorities were happy for residents of the Leys to '...live next door to it [drug dealing] like we don't matter and, you know, the quality of our lives is not important.' (Ulla). For Ulla the failure of the authorities to act effectively is both an outcome of how the area and its residents are perceived by the authorities and is functionally valuable to the police. She argues:

I think that ties in perfectly with the idea that, yes, we know where the drug dealers are, and that's it, we know, are we going to do anything about it? No, we know where they

are, so that's fine, and if they're on Blackbird Leys we at least we know where they are.

(Ulla).

## **6.9 Conclusion.**

There seems to be a public image of any given city which is the overlap of many individual images. Or perhaps there is a series of public images, each held by some significant number of citizens. Such group images are necessary if an individual is to operate successfully within his environment and to cooperate with his fellows. Each individual picture is unique, approximates the public image, which in different environments, is more or less compelling, more or less embracing. (Lynch, 1960:46).

In their discussion of stigma and regeneration, Hastings and Dean observe that 'every city and town in the UK has neighbourhoods which have reputations for problems such as poverty, crime, drug abuse or physical decay' (2003:1). These 'stigmatised neighbourhoods' are often deemed to have long-standing, intractable problem images rooted in their history (see also, Power 1987, Forest and Kearns, 1999, Hastings, 2004). Whether or not stigma is the appropriate concept a number of the characteristics that Hastings and Dean (2003) identify in these neighbourhoods can be seen to apply to Blackbird and Greater Leys including physical isolation, limited leisure and retail facilities. Furthermore, such neighbourhoods receive routine vilification in popular and media discourses, including the portrayal of residents as 'different' and/or 'deviant'. (Hastings and Dean, 2003, Damer 1992, Murie, 1997). Like estates in other cities these particular locales had long been labelled as 'problem' areas and are often conceived of in terms of what Wirth (1938) would describe as areas of social disorganisation. Such localities are portrayed as home to criminally minded and welfare-dependent 'underclass', comprising single-parents, 'welfare-junkies' and a

volatile mix of other groups with pathological traits and behaviours – increasingly ‘othered’ as the ‘enemy within’ – whose existence ‘undermined morality’ and ‘decent values’ (Dean and Hastings, 2003). One outcome of this is to render, over time, these estates as ‘places of last resort’ both in terms of the local housing system and popular mythology (see also Reynolds, 1986, Damer, 1992, Hastings, 2004).

Hastings (2004), building on her earlier work with Dean for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2000, 2003) study of three stigmatised estates in Edinburgh, Birmingham and Newcastle, explored directly with residents how they account for the stigma that is attached to the three areas. Hastings argues that all three estates Greater Pilton (Edinburgh), Pilton and Castle Vale (Birmingham) and Meadow Well (Newcastle) experienced significant stigmatisation that was underserved. In addition, she argues that the Meadow Well has endured the ‘severest stigma’ of the three estates linked directly to the confrontations between young people and the police in 1991 which, as with the Leys, reinforced and nationalised the estate’s poor image through extensive national media coverage (Hastings, 2004). Hastings reports that her participants could be divided into two groups which she terms as ‘normalisers’ or ‘pathologisers’. Normalisers portrayed the residents of stigmatised estates as no different from the general population and distanced themselves from behavioural explanations of neighbourhood problems. While this group did admit that some residents could be problematic these were very much in the minority. She notes:

Thus, within a normalising discourse, most residents of these estates are like those of any other type of neighbourhood: largely decent and hard working. Moreover, where problems do occur, this is within the boundaries of what is ‘normal’ rather than pathological. (Hastings, 2004: 244).

Within the normalising discourses the problems of the estate or area are explained as a consequence of external structures and influences rather than as outcomes of the characteristics of the residents. Thus high-levels of unemployment are explained as outcomes of a dysfunctional benefits system, the interaction of this system with the local labour market or discrimination against job seekers from the estates by potential employers. On the other hand ‘pathologisers’ deployed a ‘classic behavioural discourse’ to explain the problems of the estates (Hastings, 2004:246).

I argue the Leys residents I interviewed were more inclined to be ‘normalisers’ rather than ‘pathologisers’ seeing the difficulties people face on the estate as enforced by external agencies, structures and reputational stigma. In this sense participants are implicitly endorsing, amongst others, Lynch’s view quoted earlier, that there are social and political functions to the repetitious characterisation of specific areas of any city as problematic. This was recognised by Joel who said:

... I think every English city has and possibly in other countries too, of you know, a mythical area where all the problems are. I think this is part of our, you know, mythology, cultures, way of seeing the world, that we are a city and we have our downtown area, our sort of troubled spots where no one goes. And in Oxford it must be Blackbird Leys. (Joel).

## **Chapter Seven - ‘So I like Blackbird Leys’.**

I like Blackbird Leys. I have been living in Blackbird Leys since I came over to the UK. And pretty quickly I actually got involved into the community particularly you know, when I had my children and used the family centres and then I became involved with the Community Centre and started working for the community as a volunteer and also got engaged with people, you know, parents. (Rosie).

### **7.1 Introduction.**

In chapter six I examined how participants report the ways in which they see the estate as ‘othered’ by those who do not live there and, as participants suggest, do not know what the area is actually like. I demonstrated clear indications that participants articulate a sense of the area as experiencing forms of territorial stigmatisation that were explored in chapter two. Whilst it might be an overstatement to argue that this area is a ‘hyperghetto’ in Wacquant’s terms (2008, 2009) there are clear parallels with the examples drawn from the wider literature on the phenomenon of territorial stigmatisation (see, for example, Hancock and Monney, 2013, Jensen and Christensen 2012, Slater and Anderson, 2011, Warr, 2005, Wassenberg, 2004a, 2004b), and participants reports of how this stigmatisation impacts in negative ways on their life chances and everyday experience.

In this chapter I explore what the participants see as the strengths and positive accounts of living on the Leys. Overall, the data explored here presents a much more positive sense of what living on the estate is like with participants reporting how much they value living there and how much they feel part of a vibrant, safe and, in many ways, a thriving community. The data is, of course, complex and multi-layered and although participants are generally positive about their experiences of living on the estate they also raise specific issues and experiences that highlight some of the limitations and less positive aspects of the area as



well as the sense of negative change that some feel they have experienced over the time they have lived there. Whilst, I explore these concerns and issues in more depth in chapter eight this chapter will also show, in discussing the positive aspect of life on the estate, how individual participants also raise examples of how their day-to-day life is a mix of both positive and negative experiences. From the perspective of the overall argument I wish to advance here, one of the important aspects emerging from the analysis is not that the estate can or should be constructed as either a ‘good’ or a ‘bad’ place to live but rather that consideration should be given to challenging the ways in which ‘bad’ or negative aspects and perceptions of the estate and those who live there should not be taken as definitional of either the locality or those who live there.

## **7.2 Participants’ Descriptions of the Estate.**

At a general level, and in direct contrast to the ways in which participants responded to the question of how people from outside the estate view the area and those who lived there, they were keen to express both positive views and experiences of living on the Leys. For example, the following comment from one of the younger participants is indicative of the general sense of the experience of living on the Leys:

What’s it like to live on Blackbird Leys? I actually enjoy living in Blackbird Leys. I don’t like the reputation it’s given. (Ronnie).

Interestingly, this participant, while affirming how she enjoys living on the estate also reflects on the negative external reputation discussed in Chapter Six.

... it’s got everything, everything that I need. Especially being of the older generation.

You know, it’s just got everything I need. The bus service, I can go wherever I want to

on the buses. Very good bus service. The area where I live, you know, the amenities I think are excellent. (Charles).

Furthermore, this view is not confined to long-term residents or people who have always lived on the Leys and is reflected in the views of people who have moved onto the estate more recently and, in some cases, from overseas, as reflected in the opening quote to this chapter.

In similar ways as I asked participants how people from outside the estate view the area I asked them a relatively simple question in regard to living on the estate this being - how would you describe this area? Answers to this question tended to elicit two main observations that characterised the participants' responses. First, were a set of observations that reflect a sense of how the estate is constituted in demographic, socio-economic and geographical terms as well as echoing some of the sense of how the estate is seen from outside: these include the peripheral location of the estate, the relatively high levels of unemployment, a concentration of low and insecure incomes, fractured and short-term employment which can lead to a downward pressure on people's incomes, sense of self and wider feelings of frustration. Second, within these descriptions participants identify many positive aspects of the social composition, social interaction and networks across the estate. In particular, and in contrast to many of the assumptions which characterised New Labour's approach to regeneration and social exclusion which tend to stress the absence, loss or negative experience of 'community' (Levitas, 1998, 2000, ODPM, 2005, SEU, 1998). Thus, one participant comments:

Blackbird Leys is a peripheral estate, low income area, with as you've just been saying a sense of community and pride that people do show, a place where you meet people if

you walk up and down the street, you find yourself talking to people. A place with, you know, a number of issues of unemployment, of very low paid employment, of broken, temporary, part time employment, which depresses people's income and leads to frustration, particularly in young people, who have less avenues of hope for the future. (Liz).

Another participant echoes this view stating:

A large area heavily populated with a large mix of old and young, working and non-working people and a mix of races living on one estate. A big community but also little pockets of communities as well within a community. Very friendly, I find it very friendly. I can't walk from one area to another without, you know, saying hello to quite a few people. (Ella).

Thus, despite acknowledging the presence of deprivation and social and economic marginality both of these statements highlight both a strong sense of community and pride in the area and that community. However, the second statement adds an important nuance that indicates that whilst there is a large, cross-estate community identity there are other communities nested within this community which appear to have specific (positive) characteristics and this aspect will be explored in more depth later in this chapter but this chimes well with other studies such as Suttles (1972) who not only identifies how a community is often constituted by multiple sub-communities but also how these sub-communities can manifest different characteristics and identities within one overall geographical location.

Another interesting observation that emerges in these initial exchanges with residents,

but also becomes more developed as the interviews progress, is the idea that the ‘old’ or ‘original’ part of the estate is somehow superior (in physical and social terms) to the newer, post 1993 development. Thus, whilst maintaining that it is a physically pleasant area the following statement also highlights the impact of less favourable approaches to the planning of the area by the City Council.

... physically it is quite a pleasant area. Especially as we look out to this area,<sup>37</sup> to what I call the posh end of the estate, the bit that was built first and won all the planning accolades, before they started sort of gobbling up the spare spaces and squeezing in extra housing. (Joel).

This sentiment is repeatedly expressed by older participants who are resident in the part of the estate built prior to 1993 and, on occasions are accompanied by the sense that the original estate is in many ways more ‘authentic’ than the that built after 1993. This relates not only to the quality and design of the buildings, but also the sense of community, community function and the sense that there was somehow a more genuine commitment to resident and community well-being at work in the original aims and objectives of the City Council and its planners when the original estate was constructed. Aims and objectives replaced over time by more functional and economically driven concerns about the maximisation of effective space utilisation.

### **7.3 A Sense of Community.**

The analysis of the interview data also demonstrates that one of the main aspects of living on the estate that people reported was the value of what they saw as a strong sense of community. Participants repeatedly stress that they felt they were ‘part of a community’, that

---

<sup>37</sup> The participant is referring to the area around the community centre.

they 'belong' and that they feel 'at home'. Participants often refer to 'knowing' or being 'known' by other residents either by sight or more formally and that this builds a 'good sense of community' and provides a sense of being included. For example, one participant stated:

... Blackbird Leys well I felt at home, particularly after I'd had my children, you know, I can go along the road and you know, I always can greet people because I know them or people greet them and that is a really nice, nice feeling. (Sara).

One of the older participants also reflected on the strength of the community and of the area being a 'good place to be' reminiscing about how, forty years earlier he had visited the estate to deliver a message.

Well it's difficult for me to identify something because I feel that the sense of community, the sense of a good place to be is the best thing about it. But that might be entirely subjective, because it first struck me when I came up here to deliver a message for somebody when I'd only be in Oxford for two weeks, and knew nothing about Blackbird Leys, that as I was walking across the central park on a sunny day, I thought, this is a very nice area, this must be one of the better parts of Oxford. [laughs] That was in 1974 and it stayed with me. I didn't live in Blackbird Leys until 1979. But ever since that day I wanted to come and live here. I got here in '79. (Jack).

Strikingly, given the negative reputation the area has, this participant demonstrated a strong aspiration to live there from the first moment he visited the area. Another participant also highlighted not only the existence of multiple communities but also reflected this notion

that the 'original' part of the estate (Blackbird Leys) was where the 'real' community was located.

I think there are many communities here really and there is definitely over in Blackbird Leys the community members that get involved with the community centre is one community up on its own, and then you've got the church community, and then I suppose it's like little pockets of communities, within that. Like there are some areas where they have street parties every year, like at [Street name removed] they have one every year, and no one else is organising it. It's something that they do themselves. So they obviously feel a sense of belonging within that street or two. So yes, and I think there's also pockets of isolation. (Mags).

This participant also highlighted how the sense of belonging is nested at different levels, from the overall estate, to the area first developed as an estate right down to individual streets where networks are strongest and interactions seemingly most vibrant.

Despite the geographical size and density of population other participants stress that the area is, in actuality, quite small, almost village-like as the following extract demonstrates:

Well Blackbird Leys and Greater Leys together, it's not very big I would say, and I think most people know each other, you know, if they're here for a good period of time, like two years or over, people tend to know each other. (Geoff).

Another participant noted that though the area was characterised by closeness and by people knowing each other she sensed that this was very much ordered around age and familial networks, as well as specific roads and closes in the estate. Furthermore, this participant identified the importance of proximity in developing mutual respect amongst long-term residents who have grown up together.

Now I don't know any of the young people on this estate, apart from my kids. I know a lot of older people on the estate because I've grown up with them, gone around with each other a lot of the time, but we know each other and to a certain, a certain amount we respect each other, even though we might not get on too well, we respect, because we've grown up together. Now there is a lot of that on this estate. But as I say it's within age groups and within areas a well, because a lot of people don't seem to move a lot across the estate. People tend to stay in their houses longer on this estate I've noticed. I was in [street name removed] I lived there for seventeen years, and the only reason I came up to the tower block was because my son when he got married, he married a lassie with a daughter, and they had a son and they shoved him up on the eleventh floor of the tower block in a two bedroomed flat. (Martha).

However, though the area is thought of as a pleasant place to live this sense of 'smallness' is sometimes also attached to a sense of insularity and of being rather closed in:

A very pleasant area to live in. There is a lack of facilities for us to actually engage formally into such as a social club and things, but actually nice neighbours. A bit closed in, but yes, I'm quite happy living here really. (Mike).

One outcome of this sense of community, of being known and of knowing others is that a number of participants stressed how safe and included they felt on the estate, again, something that tends to contrast with both external perceptions of the estate as 'rough' and 'dangerous' and policy and professional focus on the absence of security, crime and disorder (Hughes, 2007). Notions of feeling safe were clearly important to a number of the participants and this was often commented upon as in the following two examples:

I feel safe. I feel included in my, local area, that people stop and chat and people smile at you, so yes, I enjoy it. (Rosie).

Yes, like far more safe than... because everyone seems to know each other that I find that if I go from one friend's house to another friend's house I don't feel uncomfortable travelling by myself, getting back from like. If its 7 o'clock I don't have that fear. I don't have that fear when I travel from one part of Blackbird Leys to the next. Because when you're on your way people, senior people know who you are, and you're more likely to recognise so and so as a character when you're on your way home. (Iz).

It is significant that age and seniority are mentioned in a number of these responses. Older residents highlight the significance of their age, the age of those in their social networks and the longevity of residency that often accompanies this. Martha above highlights how a lot of residents have 'grown up' together and have lived on the estate for a long period of time. In some of these comments it appears as if participants are not only recognising another form of sub-community (age and longevity) but a particular type of sub-community that implicitly reflects some form of 'traditional values' evidenced through both the longevity of their residence and their shared experience of growing up on the estate. A status, perhaps, reflecting a notion and value of being amongst the first or very early residents of the estate.

However, Iz comments that she feels safer because 'senior' people recognise her when she travels around the estate which suggests that age and longevity possess a wider significance to other residents who may not have lived on the estate so long but value the sense that being known to 'senior residents' is of value. Analysis of this data suggests that participants offer quite nuanced, reflective and sophisticated conceptions of how the larger



spatially defined community of the Leys is constituted through a set of multiple and sub-communities which overlap and interact.

However, although the notion that the Leys is a community or can be characterised as having a strong sense of community spirit further analysis of the data demonstrates that residents articulate a number of complex and at times contradictory readings of what the community might be and how it is constituted. Thus, in this following extract, whilst stressing that there is a strong sense of community in which many people know each other, this participant also highlights how ambiguous local pride in the area can be:

There's a strong community sort of, a lot of people know each other. I wouldn't say everyone knows each other but I mean it can be like that sometimes. Yes, sort of, there is a certain amount of pride within the area like. Sort of local pride I suppose like. But then it's a strange kind of pride, because, how do I put it? Sort of proud that it's, not proud that it's bad, proud, just proud of the way it is I suppose. (Les).

Although stress is placed on the sense and strength of community it is also depicted as both hidden to the wider city or to those outside of the estate and, to some extent, hidden to those who live there. For example, this participant notes that whilst residents will defend their area and its identity it is unlikely that local journalists (who are seen as some of the most guilty for reinforcing the negative reputation of the area) could ever be persuaded to accept the notion that the area has actual strengths and that there are positive aspects of the area.

You can be rude about Blackbird Leys to anybody on Blackbird Leys and you'll get a very shirty answer. Not worth trying. And I think it's a community that can do it if a journalist can be persuaded to listen. But I don't think they do. (Jack).

In addition to the notion of a ‘hidden’ or ‘ignored’ community others suggest that the full extent and identity of that community is unrealised by those who live there. The following extract articulates how the estate, as a deliberately constructed and planned development rather than one that developed in its own time, located on the edge of Oxford and akin to a form of ‘New Town’ and peopled by many who came from previously established communities in other parts of the city and county has not fully developed its own sense of what it is (see Mogey, 1956, Morris and Mogey, 1965 for similar discussions of the development of the community at Berinsfield, Oxfordshire and Barton, Oxford).

I think its main strength is probably is actually it's a community that really maybe doesn't quite realise it. It's because it was a planted settlement forty odd years ago. A lot of people came up here already knowing each other. They then go to school here, so they go on knowing each other. So you've got granny, daughter, grandchildren or some. (Liz).

This is an interesting insight to how some of the residents who have lived longest on the estate conceive of it as a community that consists, for some, of pre-existing family and other social networks. This notion of unrealised or potential community is further supported by notions that there are a number of people on the estate who are motivated to act collaboratively and in the objective of community enhancement but, for some reason, are deterred from so doing for fear of becoming more visible, although it is not clear whether this is to other residents on the estate or more formal interests and groups.

Bearing in mind that the best of communities in modern society are fragmented and broken. But every now and then you hear complaints of us and them, but when you look at it, you find there are plenty of groups that are some of us and some of them. (Mags).

One theme that re-occurs is that people who have moved away from the estate are glad to move back having missed what they see as the genuine forms of community, social interaction and networks.

One friend of mine moved away from Blackbird Leys to the highly desirable Wolvercote area of Oxford and she hates it. She says it's snobby, closed, the other kids won't play with her kids and so on. (Rosie).

Others reflected on how they had moved away, in the following case for an employment opportunity, and moved back, in this particular case it was the individual's partner, not originally from the estate, who wanted to move back.

It was initially yes, because I had a job to go to, but the job itself wasn't really what I wanted to do, and my wife didn't like... we went to live in Northamptonshire and my wife didn't really like it, so we came back here. Although she's not from this area. She's from Hereford. But yes, that was the intention to move away and not come back. (Mike).

What might be argued from consideration of these responses from participants is that whilst the notion of community (in both positive terms and a good place to live) is

accompanied by a set of complex notions of what that community might be or how it can be understood, it reflects much of the more complex and nuanced discussions of community found in the literature (see, for example, Amin, 2005, Bell and Newby, 1971, Crow, 1997, 1999, Day, 2006, Hoggett, 1997, Morgan, 2005, Pahl, 1970, 2005). Thus, participants articulate notions of ‘multiple communities’ of communities within communities, of both spatially (Hastings, 2004) and relationally (Cohen, 1985) delineated communities which are sometimes highly localised (for example, a street or small cluster of streets as a ‘community’ as well as generalised but sometimes competing definitions of what constitutes a community and a community identity (Hoggett, 1997)). My analysis of the interview data suggests that these different experiences and views are not strictly tied to age, ethnicity, gender or even length of time on the estate (although these may be important elements of individual and collective views and experiences) but that they are linked more directly to senses of knowing and being known, of agency, motivation and experience and of connectivity to and within existing and even pre-existing networks.

#### **7.4 Formal Community Resources and Networks.**

Over the years when I have worked within communities on programmes of community consultations and development I have often used a technique called ‘Build a Community in a Day’. In this activity participants are asked to design the area they live in as if they were designing it from new, using a blank sheet so to speak. Two things tend to emerge out of this activity. First, the design of the ‘new’ estate differs significantly from that which already exists and second, the importance of what might be called formal community resources, in the form of community centres, churches, shops, schools, leisure activities is of central importance to residents. In many ways, it might be argued, residents’ views of the quality, availability and accessibility of the area’s infrastructure are an important aspect of how they experience where they live as both a functional and desirable place to live. It is also

the case that the resources and infrastructure of one area provides a reasonable comparative measure against other areas in the same city or, indeed, in regards to other cities across the country. This is perhaps even more so in a consumer society where individuals make judgements (implicitly and explicitly) about what they and their community ‘have’ in terms of community resources and infrastructure. It is also the case that local and national regeneration interventions often focus on the physical infrastructure of the areas receiving attention and disputes between policy and political actors, and the local community are often most acute around proposed changes to the physical infrastructure of an estate. Thus, this section of the chapter explores how participants in this study talk about the community resources they see as available to them and what value they bring to them and the wider community.

#### **7.4.1 General.**

When asked about the facilities available to them on the estate most participants readily listed a set of key resources, formal spaces and organisations they know of or accessed. These typically included the community centre, IT Hub, the leisure centre, schools, Credit Union, advice centre, pubs, open spaces and parks and shops and were generally seen as making a positive contribution to life on the estate. For example:

We’ve got the IT Hub, community centre, leisure centre. We’ve got a lovely, it’s called the Boiler Room, which is a lovely little café. Which serves very good food. (Martha).

Participants reported a sense of a network of community resources, spaces and activities through which professional service providers and local voluntary groups deliver support to different groups (for example, young people, older people, mothers, vulnerable individuals) who live across the estate. For example:

They do a lot of work on self-development and confidence building in the youth clubs. I've noticed. They make sure they've affordable. They do things like, there's a lot of darts, a lot of filming. A lot of sports, lots of days out. Lots of Drug Awareness. They have Connexions Centre in Blackbird Leys which a lot of people go there for careers advice. The youth workers seem very friendly. (Geoff).

Attempts to provide IT training for the unemployed and older residents are delivered by community volunteers through the IT Hub, located in the main community centre, and are welcomed by participants as a positive opportunity for both those seeking to re-enter the job market or to combat notions of a 'digital divide' among the population where the cost of a computer and internet access at home might prove prohibitive, as well as to socialise.

I think for the middle age group, employed or unemployed something like the IT Hub is really essential. There are a lot of people who really can't afford a computer. It's wonderful that it exists on a voluntary basis. It's helped an awful lot of people, me included. It's because people have attended courses, again me included, you make friends if you're not already in the area. I moved into it. I'm not a native. (Rachel).

The buildings across the estate which have been built to house community centres, voluntary groups, social activities and so on are generally well-used and considered to be of a good quality. In particular the set of buildings built in the 1990s along the interface of the 'old' and 'new' estate – for example, Kingfisher Barn and the Clockhouse – are valued as useful and good quality public buildings.

However, discussions of the positive aspects of the estate's resources and infrastructure are accompanied by reflections on the need for activities and support for people

who are struggling on low incomes and who, perhaps, struggle to access financial support from mainstream financial services. For example, the following extract whilst welcoming the opening of a new ‘pound’ shop also reflects on how prohibitive, in terms of prices and costs, other forms of shopping can be.

We’ve got the Pound shop and stuff which is brilliant and that’s opened up because that will help parents so much with just doing the food shop. For things like crisps and like those sorts of things and like for Christmas, tinsel and stuff everything. It’s a 99p shop actually. I’m so glad that’s opened, that’s brilliant. Because you can get school supplies from there as well. And just things for the house like toiletries and like cleaning products which is brilliant. (Jan).

The importance of access to lower-priced goods is also reflected in the following statement about the regular Sunday car boot sale which is held in the car park of the Kassam Stadium (Oxford United’s home ground) on Grenoble Road. This is a very popular event for residents not just of the estate but from across the south and east of Oxford more generally and it is well-attended, forming a focal point for social interaction amongst families and the wider community. The extract below highlights this as well as the importance of the event in terms of accessing inexpensive household and other items.

There’s a Sunday car boot sale. That is, that is massive, like my Dad’s always going there, and we’ve had like car boot sales for Comic Relief there, for like a holiday to Spain, to France. You find a lot of people going there, like in the morning, like children or like generations, or like grandparents, parents and children going there and just getting stuff for the house. (Will).

The importance of the Credit Union on the estate, which is run by volunteers out of the main community centre (Leys Linx) and has an active membership of around 1,200, was also stressed by a number of participants. The Credit Union, now in its 25<sup>th</sup> year of operation, provides an important source of small loans and credit as an alternative to ‘pay-day loan’ companies which offer small term loans on extremely high short-term interest rates or the lure of illegitimate ‘loan sharks’ who can be found operating on the estate. The following extract indicates the importance of the Credit Union to some residents as well as the importance of affordable social and leisure activities younger family members.

The Credit Union so people you know, can save money, can borrow money, small amounts. What else is there? Let me think. Okay there’s the cinema now, which you know, offers Saturday, Sunday and holiday mornings the Kids A.M. which is brilliant. You can go with your kids for £1.75 per child, which is good. (Rosie).

These final three comments from Jan, Will and Rosie indicate how important to some participants it is to find inexpensive ways to purchase household items and make their resources go further. To some extent there is a sense of making-do and getting by (in materials terms at least) that echoes finding from other studies of large housing estates (see for example, McKenzie, 2015; Smith, 2005; Vincent et al., 2010; Young and Wilmott, 2007).

#### **7.4.2. Primary Schools.**

Although formal attempts to develop an extended school offering during the New Labour terms of office were not an unqualified success especially in relation to secondary schools (DCFS, 2009) there are indications that the three primary schools<sup>38</sup> located within the geographical area of the Leys offer a valued set of contributions to the community.

---

<sup>38</sup> Orchard Meadow Primary School, Pegasus Primary School, Windale Community Primary School.



The fact that in Blackbird Leys you have like three main primary schools, and all of them seem to give a lot of support to parents when they have difficulties at home. I went to Pegasus Primary and because Blackbird Leys can be, is a deprived area, so you find a lot of problems at home. And I felt like the schools are usually quite quick to pick up on that. They're quick on acting on it and they seem to know what to do with the children. They seem to have that kind of hands on approach. The schools seem quite motivated. So there's a lot of parent involvement in the schools, not like being governor, being on PTA, but actually just knowing what's going on without having to join a committee and having less say in the schools which I think is happening in all three of them. (Iz).

Some participants raised important issues when discussing the function and role of primary schools. Overall primary schools in east Oxford are not considered to be particularly effective in preparing students for secondary school with attainment and performance being recurring concerns to local council officials and head teachers of the local secondary schools. But analysis of the data suggests that these schools perform valued and important tasks that offer some young people and families stability, sources of support and in some respects forms of 'sanctuary' for some young people.

I think I might have been ten, I think I might have been in year five. I think that the school always had a hands on approach and that a lot, a lot of things are taken through the school. So if you need a help with something at home like domestic abuse or like drug abuse or something like that of parents, they'd go, they'd go and get picked up from the school and go through the school and people felt like they could confide in the

school when there was an issue. Or if there were money problems paying school dinners that the school would take care of that, because Blackbird Leys is such a community. (Ronnie).

For this participant, at least, there is a clear sense that these primary schools were an integral part not only of her development and childhood but of the community and that this formed an important element of community support, networking and organisation.

#### **7.4.3. Community Centres.**

Participants reported positive experiences of the community centres. (This phrase tended to refer to any building used by community groups or by community organisations rather than those formally defined as such. The activities referred to when discussing community use of such premises were, likewise, a mix of formal, informal, structured, unstructured, regular and occasional), their location across the estate, their use and their value to the community. These spaces are important for community interaction in terms of leisure, social and informal gatherings and interactions. In addition, they are regularly used for more structured events and interactions around IT training and, for Sara, for developing family relationships and interactions.

There's a lot of stuff going on with the community centres. They seem to know how to target people. In the summer they always have something for Afro Caribbean people. They have their own workshops. Well they have a mixed heritage, Blackbird Leys does have a lot of African people living around the estate and they have a lot of people dual heritage, sometimes living with a white parent, and sometimes difficult for the white parent to understand things and it immediately gives a different image of the way that someone who is of dual heritage should behave or Afro-Caribbean. So they have like

workshops for the parents or guardians to go to, to ... so that they can all talk about their experiences and how they feel they should parent. And that they don't understand how, the feelings for the other side of the family. To make family relationships just go that little bit stronger. (Sara).

The Family Centre<sup>39</sup> also offers a range of activities, structured and unstructured for children, families, specific activities for fathers and children, pre-natal, post-natal and other health and early intervention services to the community which are valued by the community.

I think the family centre's got a nice attitude towards how it approaches encouraging the parents to come in, and then help those parents to think about what it is they want to do, and then to build up their confidence and get them to sort of increase their awareness of what skills abilities they've got and may be you know, at the end of it, hopefully they sort of help them to think about what their next step is. So they are progressing onto something. (Ella).

These comments suggest that it may be important to distinguish between external agencies and those who are more embedded within the community. Participants were able to highlight what they saw or experienced as good provision mentioned (such as that above) which seems to understand the community. In contrast external agencies, with their deficit lens of the estate, not only find it difficult to penetrate the estate but are seen as less willing and able to engage with the estate and its residents in a constructive way. Furthermore, these comments highlight the disjuncture between the way in which the area is portrayed as lawless and deficit-laden by outsiders (including some service providers) and yet certain types of support appear to be meaningful and appreciated as such by residents. This suggests that

---

<sup>39</sup> The Leys Children Centre, C/o Orchard Meadow School, Wesley Close, Blackbird Leys.

those who provide some community services who appear to understand what type of support is useful and how to deliver it can readily gain trust and be effective. In some respects a form of circularity can be seen here that is perpetuated by all involved be it for different reasons that work to reinforce the tensions between residents and service providers..

In terms of the utilisation of community buildings there does appear to be some division in use of some of these spaces in terms of their use for older people, especially on the Greater Leys part of the estate where there is a higher density of over-50s. One participant noted:

Yes, on Greater Leys we've got the over 50s Clockhouse and they're all catered from.

Yes, so there's a whole programme of events that go on for the older ones, but we have lots of young children as well in this part of the estate, who've got absolutely nothing to do. (Ulla).

Certainly, in conducting a number of my interviews in these buildings and in spending time in them not just during the course of the fieldwork but over many years I can state that they are well-used with a vibrant range of activities, meetings and events across the year and across the day. In addition, some of them, for example the main community centre on Blackbird Leys (often known as the Leys Linx, where the Credit Union is located) also act as spaces in which people drop in and 'hang about' in casual conversation and general socializing. However, it is also clear from both discussion, observation and data analysis that it is not unusual for these informal, casual and 'spontaneous' visits to such areas also act as opportunities to access support, information and, at times, simply some peace and quiet.

#### **7.4.4. Leisure Activities.**

Discussions around the availability of local leisure activities revealed a similar pattern to discussions of other community resources on the estate. There were positive statements about aspects of the leisure activities available, including variety, range and accessibility, whilst highlighting constraints and limitations similar to those reflected elsewhere in this chapter. Thus, participants talked positively about the availability of open spaces, sports and exercise activities, the existence of an award winning choir, dance groups and even the opportunity to study New Testament Greek. But these positive comments were qualified with references to limitations on community involvement and ‘ownership’, lack of visibility of these activities (for example the choir and the dance groups) to outsiders as well as more specific concerns about the availability of suitable activities for different age groups and for the differential location of activities across the estate as a whole. As one older participant put it:

Oh there’s a lot going on by way of leisure activities if you want to swim or you want to kick a ball around or you want to hit it against a wall. (Martha).

Of course, physical exercise is not everyone’s idea of a leisure activity but nevertheless organised sports activities are an important and much participated in set of activities on the estate, especially football.

There’s lots of different clubs doing things. You’ve got the Blackbird Leys Boys and Girls Football Club. They’ve got a huge membership. You’ve got all the... you got the

dance, the dance School<sup>40</sup>. You've got all, lots of different clubs and things running. So that's nice. I think there is quite a bit. (Liz).

Participants also noted the existence of open spaces and parks which provide space for organized activities, such as football as well as more informal play spaces for children and families.

Several parks, and very good parks for the children. Obviously I've got no children, but, well I've got grown up children, but if you've got small children I would think that that's adequate too. (Will).

Once again, however, the availability of suitable activities and space for different age groups is questioned by one participant who notes the concentration of activities for younger people:

I think the parks are good, the park spaces. I think there's quite a few kiddies' activities and clubs and stuff they can go to. I don't think there's probably enough for all the age groups. I mean there seems to be an awful lot of money being spent on 16 to 19 year olds but nobody else. If you try and get funding to do something else for people over 19, then you're hitting your head against a brick wall. There's nothing there. (Geoff).

The development of a range of leisure and social activities<sup>41</sup> on the edge of the west of the estate around the relocated Oxford United Football Club stadium has been appreciated by many residents:

---

<sup>40</sup> [www.messyjam.com/](http://www.messyjam.com/)

I think it's the whole Kassam complex. I like that's one of the things I like, but I also like the fact that I'm so close to everything. We're within, actually if you can, this is obviously if you can walk comfortably, you can walk to Cowley Centre, you can walk to the large Tesco's. So most things, provided you're not, you know, disabled you can actually walk to get to what you want. The bus stops are very good, the buses come regularly. That's, I'm talking about lots of things I like. Five minutes into Oxford, to the train station. The bus service I think is one of the things I like most because being a pensioner I've got my bus pass. So I've gone into several things. (Jack).

Jack notes there may be those who find it harder to access these resources than others due to restrictions to their mobility. As we will also see later the cost of the activities located at the Kassam complex is also a major factor in determining who can and who cannot access these facilities (see Chapter Eight).

The issue of community involvement and of community 'ownership' of activities, initiatives and even the sense of space on the estate was a recurrent theme in the data. The following extract indicates how Rachel articulated this sense of ownership and its meaning for the community:

And I think you know, what I believe if people, if you have a nice environment and people treasure it more and also people who destroy things have less of a chance. I think you know, for example when we put up the sculpture, the Glow Tree Sculpture in front of the leisure centre that was a project with Black<sup>42</sup> and so on there was a lot of opposition beforehand for that reason actually they were saying don't waste the money,

---

<sup>41</sup> This includes a ten-pin bowling alley, a multiplex cinema, restaurants and bars, a gym and the football stadium itself.

<sup>42</sup> A community arts project.

it will be damaged. It will be broken. We will not have it for long, but this sculpture has never had been touched and people it's a focus point and people talk about it and people meet there. (Rachel).

For this participant the reason that the Glow Tree sculpture was such a success and was not vandalised by residents was precisely because it was something the community had done itself, rather than something others had done to the community. That it was 'theirs' by design and development.

### **7.5 It's the People.**

Participants regularly and repeatedly emphasise that it is the people who live on the Leys who are the most important aspect of the area. Participants emphasised that the people are friendly, sociable, community-orientated, resilient and that they are prepared to 'muck-in' and help each other out. One participant, Mags, likened the area (with a population of around 13,500) to living in a village maintaining:

It's just really friendly. It's easy to get to know people. Yes, it's easy to get to know people. There's lots of different ways in which you can get to know people. They're usually quite friendly as opposed to being stand-offish, which you sometimes get in other places. I don't know, I've just found it a very, very sociable place. (Mags).

Mags further notes not only the people as a key strength but also the opportunities for everyone to 'fit in' somewhere with reference to the nesting of smaller communities within the overall community of the area.



There are a lot of, there are a lot of selfless people up here who will bend over backwards to help their friends and neighbours and colleagues and that kind of thing. And I'm like; you can't always get on with everybody else. As long as you're kind of happy living in an area, and I think this is why I like little pockets of communities with the whole, within the entire community, so although you might not feel like you're part of the main community, you're part of a small section of the community. Whether it's because you're a single parent like your neighbours and people that live around you. Whether it's because you go to the local school or that you know the mums at the school. So you fit into, I think everyone fits in somewhere. (Mags).

Statements such as this not only reinforce the idea that the community is constituted through multiple sub-communities but also suggest that participants experience the estate as suggest an inclusive environment. Although the notion of 'fitting in' may also suggest that certain compromises, measured against implicit estate 'norms', are required for that fitting in to be fully achieved.

In addition to being a 'sociable' place another participant reflected on how the community had a lot to offer a newly settled family with limited financial resources:

Also I think that Blackbird Leys you know, particularly for my family and also when we had very little money it had a lot to offer from whatever, art projects or from you know, the swimming, the sports centre, a lot of free events and if you really are on the ball and be involved and know involved and you know, we had lots of fun as a family here and really, really enjoyed it. So that's my description of Blackbird Leys. (Susan).

Here Susan underlines the importance of two way interactions between resident, activities and the community. Clearly, activities and events need to be offered and to be available but also, in order for this to be sustained and to be of benefit, residents have to be active and engage with them and the wider community. Mags also highlighted the importance of acts of reciprocity in terms of sustaining the wider community. This seems to be a consistent feature of people's accounts throughout the data. A sense that there has to be some give and take, the acceptance that you may not like everyone, or necessarily what is on offer, but in the rub of community life, you have to engage.

In exploring the issue of specific community assets and strengths, the notion of the 'people' as the main strength repeatedly came through. However, this was often accompanied by a sense of some of these strengths being perhaps latent, untapped and to some extent unknown to the community itself. The following participant whilst powerfully referring to the community's assets as 'our people' also notes the location of much of these assets as 'behind doors'.

I think, I think we've got quite a lot of assets and I think our assets are our people, because we have got, just to be, a bit of background about me, I mean I have been an HR professional, and you know, as I said, before very career driven, but I fell into illness, and I just think if there's one of me behind a door, there's lots of people behind doors that we've not yet met, we've not, we don't know what their skills and experience are that they could offer in the community, and it's about how we tap into that. So I think very much our people is one of our main strengths. (Liz).

This sense of talent, skills and abilities being somehow ‘hidden’ is also reflected in the following observation by a participant when discussing the apparent flourishing of small business activity across the estate.

And yet, it just amazes me, all the different little businesses and things people have got going. And I’m not talking about you know, on the sly, because they’re on benefits or whatever. I’m talking about legitimately you know, and it’s really interesting. And all that’s hidden. And, you know, I think gosh I’ve here all those years, and didn’t even know that. So there’s lots and lots of talent. So I think that’s strength. (Mike).

It is noteworthy that Mike was keen to stress the interesting qualifier that this economic activity was not ‘on the sly’ but were legitimate (if relatively unrecognised) activities. One reading of this might be that this participant is demonstrating an embedded negativity about the area in his own account. However, equally plausible is a reading that suggests Mike would expect others to assume these were most likely to be illegitimate or illegal activities because that what outsiders tend to assume.

## **7.6 Informal Networks and Community Support.**

The existence of informal networks of support and actions of reciprocal helping of each other out are often seen as a positive sign of a functioning community. Wacquant refers to this when he notes the collective and community support available to residents of the ‘ghetto’ in contrast to those who inhabit areas of territorial stigmatisation and it forms one aspect of his criteria of advanced marginality (1996, 2007, 2008). In this study participants tended to report positively on the existence of informal networks of support and were able to readily provide examples of help and support they had either experienced or had provide to

their neighbours as well as describing a general sense of the existence of supportive networks across the estate.

So that there is a kind of network already existing. Either family based or school based and based on friends. You've got the facilities that are offered by places like schools or churches. And these are sort of places like the Harper, really add-ons, and extras which could be used, and they spread around because there's already a network. And that would include the local library. (Rachel).

Family based networks were often identified as particularly important and long-lived with the existence of a number of large, intergenerational kin groups across the estate.

... there's some Blackbird Leys families you know, and they would not necessarily all live in the same little area but across the estate as a whole. So my next door neighbor that side, she got a lot of relatives all over the estate. Then the people who used to live next door the other side they're now living down there, they got their house by having a swap with other members of their family. That's one of the things they do they swap houses with each other [within the family group]. So they get the house that they swapped with their grandparents or something, their grandparents used to live there, and then swapped it. And now they're living over there. (Tina).

There is an interweaving of families, history, place in a way that's fascinating. Furthermore, it provides an example of how individuals and families and why people stay living on the estate and how they support each other. This familial management accommodation and residency across the generations is evidence of functional problem solving within an area widely constructed as 'dysfunctional' and 'problematic'.

In addition to family networks other forms of networks rest on proximity and length of time people have lived close to others on the estate. In these cases the sense of being known and of knowing others (over sustained periods of time) are particularly important.

So I think that is a strength you know, that people know each other and live close by, and look out for each other as well. (Susan).

One of the outcomes of these knowing and these networks was that support and helping each other out was a common feature of interactions on the estate.

I would say people tend to help each other out you know, sometimes. They don't always do it, but they sometimes do. But they sometimes do. (Mike).

These extracts present interesting qualified responses in discussing the area and participants appear to be very reflexive and measured with their comments. A number are sophisticated social observers and commentators among my participants and I wondered if this was itself an outcome of living in a marginalised area. As Lemert (2002) notes those who live on the margins being forced, by the position they occupy, to develop a clearer sense of what is happening in the mainstream and their relationship to that mainstream.

Another participant reinforced the importance not just of proximity and of knowing and being known but the impact of spatial design and type of accommodation noting the difference, in terms of knowing the neighbours and a wider social group, of living in one of the high-rise blocks (a 'vertical street') to a (horizontal) close or street.

When I lived on [street name removed], because at the moment, living in that tower block I'm living in a vertical street. I don't know my neighbours except the people on

my landing. When I lived in [street name removed], open street, yes, we did help each other, if there was a problem, if somebody had a problem we'd help. If somebody couldn't get a car started we'd help. Things like that yes. Day to day things yes. (Martha).

Mags detailed how neighbours had helped out when her garden flooded with sewage over a Bank Holiday:

Luckily my next door neighbour's a council tenant and it was affecting hers. So they came for her. But the council told me... Well the first thing I did was phone the Water Board and they said no it's the council. I phoned the council and they said no, it's you. It was horrible. Yes, my neighbours were lovely. They were all out the front sat there waiting. Everyone was out, you know, no one was out there just to find out what's happened. They all stayed out there. And it was like a nice sort of camaraderie. Lovely. (Mags).

Another recounted how she had helped a young mother by introducing her to the Homestart project (SureStart) on the estate. Although, it is worth noting how she also highlights the distance between the young women (in this case signifying the more general resident population who may benefit from SureStart) and the SureStart workers who she describes as 'officey'.

There's a woman I don't really know her that well, but I used to see her in passing, and I sat here one day and she was over by the bus stop and she looked quite. Something about her appearance didn't look quite right and I kind of went over and I said are you

all right. And she started crying and she was like real stressed out. She was there with her little boy, and she was just having one of them days, she was fed up, and I said to her, about Homestart, knowing they were just upstairs. “Never heard of Homestart.” “Come over. Come over.” You know, and I took her upstairs and introduced her to the people upstairs. But again because they’re so officey, people, I don’t suppose a lot of people know they’re they, unless you’re going to be, unless someone you, again it’s word of mouth more so than you know leaving them flyers or reading the Leys News or whatever else and she wasn’t aware that service was there. (Ella).

This is an important point about the lack of visibility of and information about services on the estate as, of course, there is little point in having good services if people don’t know about them or how they can be accessed. This may reflect, in part, how being in the ‘know’ and being ‘known’ whilst a sign of community strength for those who experience being known leaves those ‘unknown’ very much excluded and suggests that not everyone finds a place to fit in.

Support could take the form of a collective solidarity against outside agencies - in the following extract, the police

I think people on this estate tend to support each other in times of trouble when it involves the law, if you see what I mean. Do you understand what I mean. Everybody seems to, if somebody’s in trouble because they’ve got the police banging on the door or something like that, you’ll get a lot of people coming out and saying errrrr clear off and all the rest of it. You see a lot of that. (Geoff).

Mags, who was involved in a domestic abuse project, reflects a quite complex reading of both the local area and the nature of domestic abuse in different socio-economic settings.

For Mags the relatively high level of domestic abuse that is known about on the estate arises from a complex interplay of aspects of the built environment and knowledge and local support.

I think there are strengths that you know people know each other and people help each other. So, you know, it's going from my place of work in domestic abuse and I think that what I said before that it's the highest incident of domestic abuse in the area, I don't think it's because people are more violent here, but I think because the houses are so close, the flats are so close, people notice it more. People more likely, you know, to phone up for a neighbour and also people, I think people are more likely to know about children's support within the community and also if say, you know, if say they try to solve the situation it may be split up on. So no they don't fall down, perhaps they have the social knowledge as well that says no you know, they could get other housing, they could get out of the situation, what might be not in an area where people you know, live in semi-detached houses and have completely different lifestyle. Whereas the abuse is much more hidden away. (Mags).

Once again the importance of the spatial aspects of the community are stressed here in the links this participant notes with the serious issue of domestic abuse and housing needs can impact on its visibility and levels of reporting, as with Martha's comments on the impact of living on a vertical street (a tower block) had on the interaction between residents. The role of the design, structure and allocation of housing are important themes for participants in terms of a range of aspects of their lives such as their integration into the community, their access to amenities and activities and, in Mags's case the visibility of domestic abuse.



Another recurrent theme that was returned to in discussion of this topic was the sense that the residents of the area are the only ones that can (and will) drive change on the estate usually because external agencies who might be thought responsible for driving such changes either won't or can't do so.

As a resident of the area, it's down to us to make the community what it is, and to make it better or allow to improve anything. So I say people can make the changes that are necessary for living in this community. (Les).

In many ways this is a powerful statement that suggests not only the recognition of the community's lack of sustained support from outside agencies but also, once again, suggests that the degree to which feelings of powerlessness and isolation have been internalised, which Wacquant (amongst others) would suggest is a consequence of territorial stigmatisation, is open to question. One last point of note in this section. One participant when asked if people helped and supported each other replied 'They do indeed. They also fall out over particular issues'. (Charles).

Reminding us that a community, in which people regularly interact, come into contact and live close to each other, is as likely to experience conflict as much as consensus and the participants in this study frequently express an acceptance of this aspect of living in a community that is quite sophisticated

### **7.7 'Newcomers', Transient Populations and Community Stability.**

Although a large proportion of the residents of the Leys have lived there a long time and would see themselves as part of a stable and long-term population there is also a reasonably high-level of population turnover for a number of reasons. Some of this is explained by participants as related to shifting patterns of ownership of the housing stock in

relation to the balance of those renting social housing, those who own their property and those who rent from the private sector.

Yes, because there's a lot of rented properties. So people that tend to stay in a place tend to own their own homes and they don't move because it's difficult to move when you own your own home. There's a lot of cost involved. So people that move are people living in rented accommodation. So even the people living in social housing are still moving. Well there's a lot of people that can't move in social housing. There's a lot of overcrowding and stuff but people stay. (Susan).

Will, indirectly, drew attention to the impact of the transfer of council housing to private ownership through the apparent differences in levels of social interaction between those who rent and those who own their own property.

And I think while in the council areas people seem to know each other, with the private housing people don't know each other. (Will).

We have seen from some of the data reported above some people who have moved to the area, including those from other countries, report that they were welcomed and enjoy living on the Leys. Likewise, some of the data supports the view that a number of long-term residents report that they value both the social and ethnic mix of the estate and the cultural and other experiences that such a multicultural community brings. For example, Sara argues that one of the main strengths of the area is the way in which the social and ethnic mix works:

The fact that we all get on. I think that we can people from very different backgrounds

that actually just chatting to people we all get on, there's not really friction. (Sara).

It is apparent, within the data that as the interviews and discussions developed evidence of less positive experiences around issues of race, ethnicity and of being a 'newcomer' emerged.

Oh I think that depends on whether the newcomer makes an effort to go out and find things. I don't think they're in any way shunned. I certainly wasn't when I moved in. And wherever I've looked around for something to do there's been a well no, we don't do it here, but we do it there, or something of that sort. So there's always been help. I think on the whole the estate is friendly. That's my experience. With some reservations about some of the kids that lived immediately next to me, but that's a different matter. (Mags).

Another participant noted the importance of length of residency on the estate as a factor in how openly people are accepted into the community.

Well they can be treated differently initially. You know, like anywhere in the world you go to as a newcomer people tend to judge you or you know, try and make up in their mind who you are or what sort of person you are. What you're doing or whatever or whatever, you know, and they don't always get it right. They don't always get it right. But as I said before after being here for a period of time, you know, people see you come and go and they say Jamaican coming in here and you know, they like the stereotype Jamaicans obviously, Jamaicans are that, you know, and until they get to know you personally then it can be difficult, it can be difficult. Whereas you feel like

you don't have a lot of fun with your friends in the area and people tend to treat you differently. (Ella).

The issue of immigrants moving to the estate and the, clearly, related issues of race and racism in this area of Oxford are complex and multi-layered. As an issue this subject did not feature as a major theme in the interviews I conducted but it does emerge. Sometimes as a feature of the experience of life on the estate but also as a city wide issue rather than one confined to the estate. In particular there appears to be some tensions around the issue of immigration from central Europe and these appear to mirror some of the concerns that have been documented and discussed in other studies. There also appears to be some tensions around Asian ethnicity and this may be linked to the issues which are seen as characterising the Cowley Road area of the city and recent high-profile criminal cases that have had significant impact on the city, such as Operation Bullfinch.

I suggest there is a complex but important distinction to be made between tensions that might or may emerge around ethnicity, race and racism and the issue of 'newcomers' more generally that may go beyond or have limited relationship to ethnic or racial prejudice and discrimination but do relate to notions of being, whatever it might mean, somehow an 'authentic' Leys person. There is a temporal dimension to being welcomed and established on the estate which a number of participants – including those who self-identified as being or having been 'newcomers' - seemed to find understandable. However, it is a mixed picture. As we have seen some of the data suggests newcomers are welcomed, valued and can quickly and effectively integrate into the wider community. Others suggest that it takes time to be accepted but this seems to apply to a certain extent to all newcomers rather than specific ethnic identities or background. Some others report a mix of acceptance accompanied by residual feelings and experiences of discrimination and even racism as this extract

demonstrates:

Well it's a bit mixed because some people once they get you know you they're all right with you, you know, so over the six years I've been meeting people, I've known people and you know, it's, it's, [um] for me it's got better. Where meeting people and responding and interacting with people as far as the community is concerned but there is still a little bit as I said earlier, a bit of racism and discrimination. (Geoff).

However, I am also aware that the issues of ethnicity, race and discrimination are concerns for other residents of the estate who I know or have met (but were not in my study sample) over the years and it is possible that a different sample group of residents would have provided a very different set of reflections on these issues. This theme is one that I would very much like to return to through further research on the estate at some point.

## **7.8 Conclusion.**

As might be expected the analysis reveals a complex, layered picture of what it is like to live on the estate and the sense of community, the quality and value of community resources and infrastructure, the role of informal, familial and neighbour networks and the social and ethnic mix of the estate. Capturing the fullness of all of this is difficult but in this chapter I have explored how many participants, irrespective of age, length of time on the estate, gender or ethnicity, have positive views about the area and the experience of living there. Participants are reflective, reflexive, thoughtful and engage in detailed discussions about the estate, their neighbours and their day-to-day experiences of living there, along with contrasting these to other parts of Oxford and, in some cases, the country. They provide rich, detailed and developed accounts of their lives on the estate, the

people they live with, neighbours, families, co-workers, community volunteers and professionals and a wide-range of illustrative examples of life on the estate.

Although there are clear statements of the positive experiences of living on the Leys, especially in regard to the sense of community and communities and the strength, skills and resilience of the residents in general there are also clear indications of constraints, limitations and negative experiences as well. These include poverty and low-incomes, lack of opportunities, depression, isolation and insularity. There is also a sense that a significant element of the estate's population are apathetic in relation to the estate as a place to live and as a place to work for in terms of future developments as this extract sums up:

So we are, I think we are at benefit, but I think a lot of people are in the habit of moaning oh we haven't got anything, but you haven't actually really seen what you've actually got. And I think the general public need to you know, really have a good look at what they've got and I think the service providers and the groups need to look at finding you know, an alternative way of getting across to the public, you know, this is, this service is here for you if you need it, you know. (Charles).

In the next chapter I explore more fully participants reflections on what they see as the limitations and more negative aspects of life on the estate and what the participants identify as the obstacles to change as well as the ways in which the participants articulate the best way to harness the potential of the residents of the estate to influence and manage change.

## **Chapter Eight – Boredom, Depression and the ‘Poverty of Opportunity’.**

I often say that there are quite a few problems in Blackbird Leys but they are not the spectacular problems that people imagine elsewhere. You know, mugging, danger in the street, all that sort of nonsense. The problems are more akin to boredom and depression, brought on by people not being able to see a way forward. (Joel)

### **8.1 Introduction.**

In chapter six I demonstrated how participants’ accounts of their experiences of living on the Leys can be interpreted as examples of territorial stigmatisation by outsiders (officials, media and members of the public) and their recognition and response to this process. In chapter seven I focused on what participants identified as the positive aspects of living on the estates and the importance they placed on particular aspects of living there. In this chapter I look more closely at the difficulties participants experienced living in the estate and discuss the impact of deprivation, lack of opportunity, limited social and other resources on the estate. Interestingly, there is no apparent sense of entitlement (to resources, material or otherwise) reflected in any of the interviews I collected. In fact, the interviews demonstrate the reverse with a sense that much of what is available to residents is provided somewhat grudgingly by the local authority (amongst others) and that continued access to services, facilities and other resources is fragile and could be removed at any point. Furthermore, despite the recognition of and reporting on poor employment opportunities, low-income and reliance on benefits no participant used the term ‘poverty’ or ‘poor’ as a signifier of poor financial resources or to categorise the people living on the estate (Shildrick and McDonald, 2013). The opening quote from Joel provides a useful opening context for this chapter. He knowingly contrasts some of the ‘spectacular’ perceptions others ‘imagine’ of the estate (crime ridden, dangerous and broken) with what he sees as a more paralysing, everyday despondency brought on by boredom, depression and, as he succinctly put it, the ‘poverty of

opportunity'. This chapter provides further evidence to support aspects of the 'territorial stigmatisation thesis' (Warr 2005; Wacquant, 1996, 2007, 2008; Musterd, 2008; Garbin and Millington, 2012; Jensen and Christensen, 2012; Rhodes, 2012) and echoes of notions of the alienated residents of Rotherham described in Charlesworth (2000). However, the evidence is incomplete, fragmented and at times contradictory. I will return to the implications of this at the end of this chapter.

## **8.2 Employment, Unemployment and Income Deprivation.**

There is quite a high level of, well straight unemployment or else its low paid jobs, that seem to come out much the same. And sometimes it is the low paid job is also a shift job, so you never know where you are. And I don't know how you bring up a family against that background, particularly if you're a single mum. And there are a lot of them round here. (Sara).

The qualitative data generated through interviews demonstrate that there are significant numbers of individuals, couples and families facing financial difficulties, stress and, consequently, material restrictions. All of the participants were either in receipt of some form of benefits, employed but in relatively low-income and often part-time employment or knew people who were. The issue of financial difficulties was one of the difficulties participants regularly reported. This took a number of forms; for example the opening quote above states quite clearly how many people face financial difficulties on the estate. But, in more impactful ways, the acute and pressing nature of financial and resource issues is perhaps demonstrated by the ways in which people discuss the prohibitive costs of, for example, food, entertainment and general socialising which are discussed later in this chapter. In more general ways the lack of financial resources is felt to be a major contributing factor to



having ‘nothing to do’ for those who live on the estate. For example, as Iz reports here, it affects participation in the local youth club, the cinema, bowling alley or restaurants.

If you don’t have a lot of money then you’re not going to go to youth club. There isn’t much else for you to do. May be, like we have a cinema in the bowling alley and we have like restaurants,<sup>43</sup> but if you haven’t got any money then you can’t use them. (Iz).

This reporting of how expensive the available leisure resources are is a consistent feature in the data. Thus several participants report that they feel the area does have reasonable leisure facilities either on or near to the estate including a swimming pool, bowling alley, cinema, and a David Lloyd Leisure Centre but all of them also stressed that these facilities were much too expensive for local people to utilise. One participant, Sara, summed this up by expressing that ‘.....there is not really anything that’s affordable and easy to get to.’ Another, Ella, notes that a ‘whole swathe of people’ are immediately excluded from participation in leisure activities on and around the estate because they are simply too expensive.

This lack of affordable access to leisure resources leads some to seek out less costly activities. One participant reported on how, particularly younger people, would sometimes travel to the Cowley Centre (a small 1960s retail precinct about three miles from the centre of the Leys). This retail precinct contains a few major high street retailers, a selection of ‘pound shops’ and similar outlets, a number of empty retail units, a small number of cafes and a couple of large public houses (although one of these has been closed for the last three years

---

<sup>43</sup> Iz is referring here to the relatively new set of amenities which have been developed on the edge of Greater Leys alongside Oxford United FC’s stadium (the football club relocated to Minchery Farm from Headington in 2001). Since then a multiplex cinema, bowling alley and gym have been added to this development. These are, however, at the very periphery of the estate and, as reported by Iz, often unaffordable for many residents.

following police action). It is an area that is showing its age, small and with limited activities to engage young people in other than ‘hanging out’ and, possibly, drinking coffee or tea. It is not an exciting or inspiring place to spend any length of time. However, as Mags reports below, visits to the Cowley Centre can constitute a form of a ‘day out’ for some.

If you haven’t got a lot of money to go, and you need money, and your friends don’t have money then there isn’t much to do. I guess what people do, just spend the day in Cowley Centre. You can kind of make a day out of going into Cowley Centre. So young people then they just go to Cowley Centre for the day. And that’s sort of like a day out. (Mags).

What also emerges from these accounts is that what resources people have access to simply do not go far enough. Everyday life is riddled with decisions about what can be afforded and, consequently, can not be. These are not choices of luxury or treats but compromises over essential items and activities. One participant saw this lack of financial resources as an outcome of unemployment, under-employment and low-paid employment as the main source of exclusion for people on the estate. Liz states:

But again I think we’ve probably covered the reasons why people are excluded.  
Because of jobs basically or money. (Liz).

### **8.3 Shops and Shopping.**

Terrible [um] shops really. I mean the Spar is popular but it’s the only one that’s for this side of the estate, and then you’ve got the top shops, but there’s not really a range of things. You can’t buy clothes or anything on the estate. (Ulla).

In this section I explore participants' views of access to shops and to the social activity of shopping on the estate. This section continues to highlight how limited resources impact on essential day-to-day purchases, such as food. In addition, I demonstrate how limited access to shops, good quality food, especially fruit and vegetables, and a sense of being 'ripped-off' by over-priced poor quality produce is frequently reported by participants. In addition, frustration at limited access to transport (to travel to better or more affordable shops) and the lack of alternative retail outlets on the estate are persistently reflected. The following extract highlights a number of key issues about the quality, cost and accessibility of shops on the estate.

Shops. They are really expensive in the Leys estate. I think if you, it disappoints me I think. If you can't drive and you don't have a large income or really any income if you're on benefits it's not something I'd really call an income. I think it's like survival, because you don't really get a lot from benefits. I think it's, I think it's difficult especially if you're an old person, because to get to Tesco's which is our nearest actual supermarket it's impossible to get to without going over the Blackbird Leys bridge, taking like a cycle route which is quite dodgy and even in the day time, I really don't like taking it and going under an underpass which is even more dodgy to get to Tesco. And then you're going to have to carry all your shopping back or get a taxi and it's almost like just going somewhere, might as well go to Cowley Centre and have to spend more money which is a shame. The local shops are extortionate unless you're getting ready meals. There doesn't seem a lot of variety in what you can buy anyway and as to prices well they're all really expensive. So if you need something for a packed lunch and you can't drive you're going to have to spend a lot more getting

something. And I think that's ridiculous. I think it's such a shame and if you look at Cowley Centre, the cheapest shop we have an Iceland which isn't exactly the healthiest of options. Or a Co-Op which is just too expensive. (Tina).

Interestingly, Tina, adds personal safety considerations to the factors that affect her choice of and access to the shops. She is highly reluctant to use the cycle path and the underpass, which for her, offer the most direct route to the retail park on the edge of the estate, even in the daytime. This apparent sense of personal insecurity is in contrast to the often stated senses of feeling safe and being known that characterised discussions in Chapter Seven.

The cost of food and related products came up consistently in these interviews and all participants said purchasing food on the estate was very expensive. They also highlighted how other options (such as the Retail Park or the Cowley Centre) did not necessarily provide better alternatives in terms of costs although they did acknowledge that the range of products and choice was much improved. There was also a sense that the cost of food on the estate was deliberately high and exploited the residents of the estate who are sometimes forced by circumstances, urgency or timing to purchase food in the four small convenience stores. Thus one participant said:

I don't know where people go for their shopping. I personally go to Tesco or Wheatley to Asda or Sainsburys. Because we have got a car. So we decide where we go. But I mean for people again that are relying on buses, I should think they go to the Cowley Centre, because there's a couple, there's a Co-op there and there's, I can't remember there's a greengrocers there as well. But apart from the shop, there's a shop, a convenience shop at the top shops I think they're called where Delteys is. But you

know, the poorest people are being ripped off there. So you've got the poorest people in society, we're saying it's such a deprived area, but you're paying sort of you know, £1.50 for a can of beans, that if you're fortunate enough to have money, you can multi buy. So the richest people are in the better position always. So yes, I don't think it's great. (Mike).

Another resident reflected both on the cost and the ways in which residents have to develop a 'canny' approach to food shopping, often honed over years of experience from living off low incomes and/or benefits.

Well that will vary who you talk to. There's a man that walks down my street every day for the last sixteen years, he's walked down my street, either before the Spar was built he walked down to Deltey's. Now it's to the Spar. He must do all his shopping in there. Twice a day I think. It must cost him a fortune. Yes. A lot of people use Deltey's, top shops, Spar, Costcutters. The one's on Balfour Road. I must admit I hardly ever do. Because I know I'm paying more and I begrudge it. You know, the years of being on income have taught me to be a canny shopper. (Ella).

Of specific concern to many of the participants was the lack of access to good quality fresh fruits and vegetables. The stores on the estate were reported as offering very little in terms of fresh produce of this sort. When asked if any of the four general stores stocked fruit and vegetables one participant pointedly reported:

No none of them do. Well I suppose there's (name removed) but he'll probably sell you a banana wrapped in cellophane a pound. So you know, if you're desperate. (Sara).

Some participants stated that using the local shops for everyday purchases was an act of last resort, to be used only when other alternatives were not readily available, for example, in specific circumstances such as time of day, urgency or lack of ready access to transport.

If I was desperate that's where I'd go. The only place, there's a time of the week when you get desperate, when none of the supermarkets are open, and that's a Sunday after 3-4 o'clock when the supermarket and then that's the time when you might go to the Spar for one of their overpriced vegetables. (Jan).

Participants also highlighted how reliant they were on access to private car transport (either their own, a family member or friends) in order to effectively access better quality and more reasonably priced grocery and household resources and reported that without access to such transport people's choices were highly limited in terms of the range and quality of food products they could access as well as the higher costs they would encounter if reliant on the shops on the estate. It is important to remind oneself how large the estate is and how far residents can be from access to the two larger supermarkets located on one edge of the estate. Accessing either the city centre or the more closely located retail parks proved difficult for those who relied on public transport.

Going into the city would be difficult I guess, because even at Sainsburys which isn't the cheapest of supermarkets either. So really you have to pay to go to town and its almost I've paid to get all that way and then I've got to carry all these bags back. So you could, if you were going right into town, or you could go to Tesco on the Cowley Road, which is a better option, but it's a smaller Tesco so it's only a select few items that might be there. So it's such a disadvantage if you can't drive and live on the

Blackbird Leys estate. Because there's nothing there for you, that isn't like affordable.  
(Martha).

The imbalance of economic power and lack of commitment to the area by large public and commercial organisations was not lost on some of the participants. In addition to recognising that the estate provides a cheap and flexible source of labour and service workers to employers across the city others drew attention to the attitudes of some conveyed in the following extract.

I don't know how many millions go into Tesco's from Blackbird Leys but if you ask Tesco's to give something back to the community (laughs). For example, when we formed (a domestic abuse community group) we had a launch with an art week exhibition here on Blackbird Leys. We went to the local businesses to ask for support and donations and obviously we went to Tesco's and we got a £10 voucher which we didn't use, we framed it. We framed it as a piece of art. Which is I think, you know, I read the reports and the millions and millions they make on profit, why doesn't more go back into the community where the money comes from. (Mags).

For, Mags, the behaviour of Tesco's in offering such a small contribution to a fund raising activity despite the significant sums of money spent by residents of the estate in the store provided a clear example of how multinationals disregard the importance of the communities they serve and how little attention they pay to the spaces where they locate their stores despite these often serving as people's local supermarket.

In the next section of this chapter I move on to consider the role of another key area of social interaction and inclusion in terms of informal leisure activities characteristic of two

very traditional community resources in Britain: pubs and clubs.

#### **8.4 Pubs and Clubs.**

I don't think there's a lot of areas, there's not a lot of space to socialise [um]. We've got two pubs on the estate. They're really nice. If that's what you like, but if you don't want to be around the pub environment and around alcohol and that kind of thing, there isn't a lot else. (Jack).

The centrality of the pub to British social life and the 'community' has become a cliché and of course, the reality of what happens in and around pubs and the contribution they make to local social life varies greatly from individual pub to pub and I have no wish to contribute to that particular narrative here. However, I recognise that the pub is one social space that is often well-used by certain members of a community and that, by and large, they are relatively common features of the British social landscape. I grew up in a small town in Oxfordshire (with a population of around 10,000 people which is 3,500 less than the Leys) where there were more than 60 public houses in the 1970s. There are just two pubs on the whole of the Leys estate which seems, by any estimation, to be a very low number. This is significant not specifically in relation to pubs and drinking cultures in and of themselves but more as another indicator (along with shops) of the relative absence of spaces for social organisation and interaction that are much more common in other parts of the city. One long-term resident presented an historical overview of the two pubs on the estate which highlights a number of issues that arise for residents around this issue of pubs.

First of all it was just the Blackbird, then they built the Bullnose and they both went gradually downhill. You've got all this noise, lots of fights and stuff. But that's been sorted out. But I think since then, because they've had the smoking ban most people are more reluctant to go to pubs because they can't smoke. And there are an awful lot of



people who smoke that go in pubs, or used to, and now they don't. And now the pubs are three quarters empty. I think that's played on it, plus also like the prices have gone up because the breweries haven't made as much money because fewer people are going in there, but the prices are now, just think well it's cheaper to go into an off licence or a local supermarket and buy your booze there and take it home. So I think that's what people do. And I think that itself keeps people isolated rather than going along to pubs, or clubs or community centres or whatever which used to happen. Well that's basically stopped. And there's less money around as well. So you just think to yourself well do I feed myself or do I go I out and enjoy myself. (Les).

This extract highlights not only the limited range of pubs on the estate but the ways in which pub use has been affected by changes in smoking regulations, availability of cheaper sources of alcohol for home consumption and another example of the impact of limited financial resources on going to socialise or staying at home.

Others reported that over the years their local pub had become less attractive as a venue for socialising due to fights in and around the pub. Although this participant still used the pub on occasions to play pool with his friends he too now preferred to stay at home with some drinks and invite friends round for a 'treat', once again suggesting that this approach may have been driven as much by financial considerations as being out of the pub physical contact.

Well, I used to go to The Blackbird and I don't really go there now because in the past there's been fights, not just in this pub, but around the area, and among people, and you know, as a result of that I don't really get to the pub very often. I sometimes go and play pool once in a while with may be the lads, you know, but I'd rather just get some

beers if I want to have a treat and you know, invite a few friends, friends I know or go to my friend's house. (Charles).

Others highlighted the relative paucity of the locations and design of the two pubs highlighting, in particular, that neither pub has a garden and that if you do sit outside either pub you effectively sit in a large car-park. Some participants identified this as a particular downside if they had young children that they wished to take to the pub at the weekend or, for example, for a family lunch.

As social spaces the two pubs on the estate did not receive much in the way of praise. The younger participants in the study tended to avoid them altogether and either socialise in their homes or the homes of family members and friends or to visit pubs located off the estate.

The majority of people I know they don't really socialise in Blackbird Leys. They go out of Blackbird Leys. A lot of people I know socialise at family and friends' houses, mainly with family really. Not really going out. A lot of people I socialise with, they're working, studying, sometimes struggle to make ends meet, so you know, they're not going to go away to many, go to the pub and go clubbing and that kind of thing. So, you know, we kind of spend a lot of time in each other's houses and socialise that way. (Ronnie).

Older residents tended to report having little contact or having used the pubs previously at some point but generally moving away from using them to socialise and meet in as they grew older. As stated this was often linked to the issue of finances and to a lesser extent changes in the pubs themselves over time. Amongst the other generally available social spaces on the estate are those catering for specific groups of residents in terms of social and leisure provision, for example youth clubs or over-50s clubs - but these too tended not to

receive unqualified praise. There was a distinct sense that amenities of these kind tended to be split spatially and unequally across the estate. Thus, on the older part of the estate, Blackbird Leys, one participant reported:

There isn't actually on Blackbird Leys a meeting place for the elderly, just as there aren't pursuits. But the one would feed the other. As I say my view from the older generation is that it's all for the younger people and therefore for their parents, which is fine, because they're probably the majority of the population. (Rachel).

Although participants reported that there were some good amenities for older people on the Greater Leys part of the estate - such as at Kingfisher Barn or the Gatehouse - such amenities were very limited on the larger and older section of the estate. One participant directly linked this absence to a form of indirect and unintended social exclusion:

I would say that because the opportunities don't exist for the elderly, they're not excluded by they're not included either. It's not a nasty exclusion, but it isn't an inclusion. Because the stuff isn't there for them today. (Joel).

Interestingly, the data reflected both aspects of this 'age-divide' in that one part of the estate was seen as offering only amenities and opportunities for young people to the exclusion of the older generation and while the other offered activities and social spaces only for older people at the exclusion of younger people. There is a clear sense of both 'young people' and 'older people' being visible users and residents of the estate - even if this was couched in negative terms of the absence of services, opportunities and amenities - which may well be linked to implicit notions that these groups are somehow more fixedly located

more or less permanently on the estate. Whereas what might be referred to as the age groups between these two were relatively invisible as a focus of specific concern. I think this section raises some interesting questions not only about what and how amenities and social spaces are available and used but also on how a large, resource-limited residential estate caters for all or even most social groups.

### **8.5 On Accessing Services.**

The only thing that I know of is the Agnes Smith Centre that's good, and also the Credit Union sort of help people out. That's all that I know that actually help people in a sort of general way rather than kids' groups and so on. (Tina)

A theme that also emerged through the detailed analysis of the data was that participants often felt that the commitment of service providers to the estate, for example local authorities and healthcare providers, lacked commitment to the provision, maintenance and quality of these services. One example was walking events around the estate organised by the local authorities and NHS and linked to healthier lifestyles and encouraging greater physical exercise. One resident described this attempt as 'feeble' and concluded:

They tried to introduce guided walks. But they're not very interesting guided walks. And I've never actually seen a great crocodile of enthusiastic ramblers. (Les).

Participants also reported that services appeared not to be sustained with new services and facilities opening and then closing without much warning or without being replaced. Thus one participant reported that:

Oh there was a point where we had a dentist and it just closed down. It just closed down, it just stopped, and now we've got another dentist opening. And I was like oh my goodness how long has there been an absence of a dentist. (Liz).

As noted already the absence of key services on the estate and the difficulties some have in accessing transport to reach other parts of the city to use alternative services is a key difficulty that many encounter and markedly contributes to some people's exclusion from such services, certainly on a regular basis. An area of particular concern in this respect which came regularly in discussions, particularly with older participants and those with elderly family members on the estate, was the difficulties that could be encountered in accessing hospitals for routine appointments. Oxford is well-equipped with hospitals having a very large general (as well as teaching and research) hospital, the John Radcliffe Hospital, as well as four more specialist hospitals, all located in Headington around five miles from the estates. These are high-quality health resources but there is no direct link between the Leys and Headington. One participant summarised the impact of this as follows:

Connections into the hospital for example, are a very, very long two bus rides away. It takes forever, unless you are qualified for transport and I think that's going to be less and less as time goes on. (Charles).

The lack of direct connectivity to the hospitals (and the consequently disproportionate time and effort residents have to engage in to access these resources) echo some of the concerns raised in the first section of this chapter on accessing quality and reasonably priced food and how important personal access to private transport can be to those living on the periphery of a city. The issue of connectivity, of the links to services, shopping, leisure and entertainment and employment opportunities were regularly remarked on by participants and were interpreted as an example of both the estate marginalisation by the rest of the city and

the lack of commitment to ensuring consistent, sustained and good quality services were available to the residents of the estate.

Another recurrent theme (especially from women with young children) was the apparent absence of adequate child care provision. This is a concern I have encountered in other deprived parts of Oxfordshire (such as Bretch Hill in Banbury). Here one participant reports on the closure of the Blackbird Leys Adventure Playground, once again drawing attention to the way in which services that people often rely on, can seemingly disappear all too readily.

.... there isn't enough child care and it's difficult for people living on the estate to find affordable child care even with working tax credits and that there was the Blackbird Leys, Blackbird Leys Adventure Playground which has now been closed down. Which, what that literally did was it used to host people from all the schools, well not like everyone from the schools, but it was based near the Orchard Meadow Primary School and near the Holy Trinity Church and it was like an outdoor adventure playground with like an indoor part and that was like the biggest out of school club that we had. And that got closed down not all that long ago. (Rosie).

The impact of lack of affordable and reliable childcare cannot be underestimated especially when one considers how much emphasis recent governments have placed on getting adults back into work and the links that have been created between welfare and workfare policy initiatives. In discussing this issue of child care a number of additional but perhaps less visible themes repeatedly come to the surface. In addition to the amount and affordability of childcare participants often reflected on how much of what was available to them (say through family centres) was time restricted to the length of the school day and did not always operate outside of term times. This places additional restrictions on entering or re-

entering employment and does not map readily on to working patterns of many of the potential employers on or around the estate. Indeed one participant described how parents sometimes had to take time off (out of their annual leave) to look after their children which in turn used up time that might be used for a family holiday.

I know several parents, you know, they struggled, they struggled to find childcare, people to look after their children, and they've had to take, you know, time off work, and so they've took all this time off work and now they can't go on the summer holiday, because they've used all this holiday earlier on in the year. So you know, they say "I can't go on holiday this year, my boss says if I take any more time off work then I might not to come back to a job.' (Ulla).

The inability to take family holidays and the (potential) threat of losing one's employment in this way represents how multifaceted the impact of limited, costly and inflexible childcare provision can be specifically in areas of relatively high deprivation and low income. These impacts often reflected a gendered pattern and not only in relation to the notion of women as the main providers of childcare. For example, the lack of flexibility in the approach of child care provision meant that some women reported that being able to access, for example, health professionals (for what they would refer to as 'women's issues') on their own and without having to be accompanied by their children could be difficult. This situation has only worsened since the fieldwork was conducted as extensive national and local government cuts to social and welfare budgets have impacted on some of the hitherto available provision. Although access to affordable, flexible and quality child care was mentioned by both women and men it is also the case that this issue has had specific impacts on women with children and appeared to lead to further gendered inequalities that impact on

employment, income and in some respects, access to healthcare.

Participants also identified how variable access to services and to their own transport could impact on the area's general environment. In this case the difficulties of removing larger items of rubbish, either through the services of the local authority or by access to transport, are mentioned as factors that can impact negatively on the physical environment of the estate.

Collections of things like rubbish. Also things like if you want to get rid of rubbish, like furniture or whatever, if you haven't got a car it makes it very difficult. And I've heard that the council are stopping collections now, where you can phone up and say, can you take this old bedstead away or whatever. I've heard that they're actually going to stop that. So what do people do that haven't got cars and vans and stuff? (Les).

The additional prospect of the council introducing fines for those who do not dispose of their larger domestic refuse 'correctly' was also seen as having a further negative impact on those without access to independent transport to move these items to the recycling centre on the south of the city.

Like there's places like Redbridge and stuff that do bulk vans and stuff like that and recycling and stuff like that, but for people who haven't got cars they can't make it, you know, and if the councils are going to start fining people for putting stuff into their bins, then it's the people without cars that are going to suffer. (Jan).

The complex relationship between local authority decision making and actions and their impact on the physical environment was pursued through other examples with one



participant emphasising how certain situational crime prevention measures implemented on the estate had contributed to the creation of a less satisfactory living environment. This included the presence of gates on some walkways and even the ways in which the roads around the main shopping area and community centre had been redesigned in the wake of the ‘hotting’ episodes of the early 1990s. In relation to the installation of shutters on a row of shops on Cuddesdon Road one resident noted:

They’ve introduced the shutters down at the front, they’re all just bare. It would be nice if they were actually painted, but the airfield shops they’ve actually painted them all blue and they look really nice and really smart. But up there it looks like it’s a no-go zone. (Susan).

These sort of outcomes - such as not providing colourful or engaging coverings to the shops - not only encourages residents to employ phrases like ‘no-go areas’ but appears, for some of them, to reinforce the sense that the quality and aesthetic of the estate matters much less to the city council than perhaps it might.

## **8.6 Everyday Struggles.**

A number of studies of everyday life in specific communities stress the importance of ‘getting by’ (for example, Smith, 2005; Rogaly and Taylor, 2009; MacKenzie, 2015) in terms of making ends meet and ensuring access to the resources required to maintain a minimum level of functional life. This sense of ‘getting by’ is reflected in some of the discussions reported in this chapter. I think this notion of ‘getting by’ can be given added depth and significance when considering how seemingly quite small things can impact in significant ways on people’s everyday lives. Small things that are perhaps seemingly inconsequential to those with more access to financial resources and, perhaps on their own, relatively minor.

However, consideration of how multiple minor issues can impact on the lives of individuals and families, especially within the geographical context of living on a peripheral estate, reveal serious disruption to those lives. For example, I have already noted at various points in this chapter, how important access to transport is for residents in terms of accessing affordable, quality food and other resources. This is expressed clearly in this comment from one participant.

May be like getting actual bus to go to Tesco. Because that's bothered me for years. I've always thought, my parents can drive and we can go to Tesco, but other people can't. And they've got to go, like I don't know even where they do their food shopping some people. (Iz).

The importance of this issue of access to transport, of ease of mobility and connectivity to services is not confined to food and household supplies as is conveyed by Sara;

Because I moved out of my house for a couple of months. I moved to make some money and I moved in with a friend. Didn't have a washing machine so I had to use the launderette. But I had a car. It's no problem is it? No it's no problem going to a launderette if you've got a car. But when I didn't have a car and I didn't have a washing machine and I had two small children and a lot of washing to do it was miserable. I can tell you that. (Sara).

The combination of lack of transport, absence of a washing machine and the demands of laundering clothing for two young children (along with looking after them) creates a set of

experiences that are not only miserable for Sara but disproportionately time-consuming, costly and disruptive.

A number of participants described the impact of multiple factors on the quality of their everyday lives and opportunities to participate fully in the life of the community and social activities. In the following example, Charles reflects on how physical disability, lack of transport and an absence of choice in terms of leisure and social activities creates a form of exclusion for older residents on the estate.

...but I think the older generations on this estate are probably being disenfranchised. I mean we don't go bowling, I don't go bowling. The Kassam is football. Well that's okay if you like football. Old people don't. I'm 57. Thing is, I can't go over there, I physically can't go over there because I've got problems. I physically couldn't go over the leisure centre and do anything. (Charles).

Jan, one of the younger participants noted how restrictive the combination of age, infirmity, physical disability and the limited accessibility of transport, in this case public transport in the form of buses, can be for older residents.

Transport can be an issue as well. If you live in the Greater Leys area and you're disabled or you, because my Nan's disabled or you're elderly, the main bus route is really far away from Greater Leys into Blackbird Leys and some of the areas you have to take, especially at night time getting from one part to the other part are not the safest of routes to take or really long. So we do have a bus that comes through Greater Leys and there is a bus that goes through the Greater Leys area but that's only one service provider and it's not as often. (Jan).

As with Tina earlier in this chapter, Jan mentions personal safety considerations as a factor that impacts on her (and in this case her elderly grandmother) on moving around and out of the estate at night. However, she also mentions the length of journey time as another key impact as well as stating how some of the buses were frequently late and could be expensive and how this created difficulties for those who have to rely on this form of transport and how adversely, for example, can create difficulties in relation to being late for work or for important appointments.

In this section I have demonstrated how difficult the experience of everyday life can be for some residents on the estate. For me, this can often be seen as an outcome of the cumulative effect of a series of relatively small issues and difficulties. However, for those who experience them especially when one lives in an area that is peripheral, under-resourced and stigmatised, the impacts can be hugely significant.

### **8.7 Fragility and Vulnerability: ‘It’s Liked Being Robbed.’**

A recurrent theme in the data was the sense that what amenities, facilities and community organisations exist or have been developed by the community are highly vulnerable and may easily cease to exist. These anxieties appear to be based on a mixture of experience, attitudes and actions of local authorities and other funders and the actions of outside agencies who are seen as ‘using’ the Leys, its reputation and social issues as a way of attracting funding that may be of little actual value to the residents. Discussions reflected, for example, how local community and voluntary initiatives were often reliant on very small amounts of resources that were short-term and insecure. Thus Les reported on his experiences of working with a local community project called Starlight.

If you go and see (voluntary organisation) you know, they can help you to write your CV. They can help you with, because we're just about to set up doing IT for beginners. Helping people feel safe to use the computers. They've got a grant from a charity so we can put proper work stations in there. But they haven't any funding after July. (Les).

The issue of who does and does not have access to funding and resources also came up as a key concern for residents. This is an interesting point for a number of reasons. Perhaps most importantly in relation to this issue is that approaches to community regeneration and activities often state the crucial importance of community involvement. Indeed, the utility of direct community involvement in regeneration and other initiatives was widely advocated by the Labour administration of 1997-2010 to the extent that this was seen as a new and innovative approach in this policy area. However, what my analysis demonstrates is that, in reality, funding and resources that end up directly in community-led projects are limited, short-term and insecure and often incomparable to those received by non-community led initiatives or organisations. This experience really underscores a sense of 'them and us' and reinforces notions of inequality and unfairness. In the following statement, Mags reflects on how much easier it is for established, non-estate based, organisations to access funding and other resources.

They [an established charity] have access to funding. And this is just so annoying. And I've just seen people up there that are supposed to be looking out for youth visitors to the community centre and the way they're being treated, talked down to, and ignored and insulted by these people is just unbelievable and it's so unprofessional. Yet these are the people that have jobs up there. And getting paid as well. And that is really, really wrong. And it puts a lot of people off going in there. (Mags).

Once again the idea that people on the estate who have the knowledge, skills and commitment to address community issues on the estate are ignored (in terms of access to funding and resources) in favour of established and outside organisations whose expertise and priorities may not fit local need was very strongly in evidence.

Feelings of mistrust also surfaced in discussions of funding and community activities encouraged by ‘outside’ organisations. In the following example, Liz comments on the way in which Oxford City Council engaged with some members of the community in the organisation of a large community event on the estate. In this case Liz felt that the council were quick to utilise local people when it suited them but that the council would often expect substantial outcomes from very limited investment or would provide unreasonable time scales for actions to be undertaken.

That’s partly what annoyed me with the City Council, that they gave us, you know, this rush job of doing this huge event on the 8 May. There’s a real mistrust in something like that even though we wore ourselves out leafleting the whole of the estate and trying to encourage people to come up. (Liz).

There was a sense among some participants that the estate, its reputation and the issues it faces are exploited by, again, outside organisations to gain funding for projects that may not benefit the residents or the estate.

One thing I was talking to somebody the other day about this, there’s a youth organisation that’s county wide and I went to their offices for a meeting and they told me about how they’d applied for some funding to take some young people from

Blackbird Leys on a residential... I was very surprised because they don't work with people in Blackbird Leys. So why they'd applied for funding to take people from Blackbird Leys? Anyway they got this funding. And then they discovered that not enough people from Blackbird Leys wanted to go on a residential. Well that's not really a surprise because they don't work with people from Blackbird Leys. So then they contacted the funders and said could they open it out to a wider area and the funders agreed so they took other young people. So what that means is they got funding for Blackbird Leys based on Blackbird Leys's deprivation and stuff they got funding and that happens, it just, you know, worries me. (Les).

Another participant reported on how another external organisation secure funding to deliver some community interventions on the estate and then went on to claim they

Then doing the work in Blackbird Leys and then saying the Blackbird Leys is too difficult to work on. Because the people are difficult and they said Blackbird Leys is too difficult to work here. (Mags).

Participants were aware that not only was it necessary to 'talk-down' the estate and its residents to obtain funding but that external fund raisers were adept at exploiting this fact.

Using, because good fund raisers know that if they can talk about deprivation and the need they can get money from funders and if they say, you know, if they can angle in working in Blackbird Leys to their fund raising bid, then it gets, it gets funding. But working in Blackbird Leys, actually working in Blackbird Leys is a different story. (Charles).

Familiarity with the exploitation of the estate and its reputation for funding purposes by external organisations (for primarily their own ends) was common amongst participants. A number felt strongly that the interests of the estate and its residents were rarely a priority for external agencies and actors and that many of these were prepared to exploit the estate's status.

However, if the role and actions of external agencies is viewed with distrust and apprehension the converse – the organisation and ownership of activities and actions by residents themselves – is, for some participants, hindered by distrust from local authorities, government departments and other sources of funding.

Northway<sup>44</sup> well that's been knocked okay, so I think if you were running a community group using a community building in Oxford you'd quite rightly be very worried about whether you could continue and I think as a local resident looking at community space, and knowing, having, what having a community building space means, to a community it's essential. Okay so if people are going to organise themselves, if people are going to do, you know, having facilities and having groups and having things does make a difference. So you know, I know that it's important and I know that if regeneration plans would be looking at a community centre and how do you know, you know, how that could go. I think the local authorities don't trust that community groups can run community buildings themselves. I've looked at a lot of community buildings and seen some awful examples. (Ella).

Another participant described how an initiative to run a local community cafe had been passed to a corporate catering organisation rather than local residents.

---

<sup>44</sup> Another social housing estate in north-east Oxford.



It's the same organisation that runs the motorway services right. Now in my mind a community café is where there's local residents that get trained up and then they're all offering some sort of you know, lentils and stuff in the community and that's what I think would be a community café. Not run by a motorway service station company. How can that possibly be? That is a bit worrying. So yes, there is a model of doing these, where in order to make it sustainable so that it pays for itself in the future, you get all these external organisations or companies, to buy in to you community centre, so they've got the PCT buying a bit of space for the doctors, they've got the motor way service station buying in the café. Yes, and then the little bit of room that's left, maybe residents can, if they can afford to pay for a bit of it yes, but that's really not the way that a community building needs to be, because you've got to have a little bit of informality in it to make it work and you've got to have, there's got to be a range of costs to hire space, you know, they've got to be things that can happen there for free for people, as well as things that people can pay for and it can't be all these external organisations that buy in a bit, because it don't really work does it? (Les).

This perception of how the tendency of communal spaces to be taken over by external organisations (because they have more available resources than local people) at the expense of residents and how this does not work (in terms of community focused outcome) represents the sophisticated understanding participants have about how community development should be approached. The internal expertise, experience and knowledge of residents is all too readily overlooked or discounted by local authorities in favour of external agencies and outside expertise.

Futhermore, participants often discussed existing community amenities as if they were vulnerable to removal by, for example, the city council as the following extract illustrates:

There's a nice park, as long as it's not poached by the council. Because when I first moved onto this estate I understood that park was willed to the council on the understanding that it wouldn't be developed. It was a people's open space. Then the leisure centre went up. We hear, we hear there's going to be a swimming pool. Olympic sized. Now that's going to take up some space. Now there's two choices there, it either gets built where we live in the tower block which the rumours are it's going to come down, or it's going to be developed the other side of the leisure centre which encroaches on the park. So, that's a little bit of a problem. (Sara).

In addition to the concern that the park will be 'poached' by the city council (based, at least in part on past experience) participants often conveyed a sense that changes (to the estate) were being planned without residents being informed or consulted on these plans as can be seen from the reference above to the rumour that the tower block in which Sara lives being taken down to make way for the swimming pool. These comments, which revolved around trust and distrust of the motivations and behaviour of the local authorities are based on past experiences of developments on the estate and in other areas of large social housing in Oxford (for example, Northway, Littlemore and Rose Hill and Barton). The issue of trust (and lack of trust by the local authority of residents is conveyed in the following comments from Ulla who expresses the importance of sustained community activities (rather than one-off events linked to specific external priorities) in building trust within the community.

We need a lot of sustained community events. So that then people can trust that this is really something that is for them, you know, so although we had a relatively successful event in the Barn and on the green outside the Barn, and the children actually had a fantastic time with circus performers. Well what was all about?

What's coming after it? You know, so I think we need to have a real encouragement of not giving up. (Ulla).

There is a powerful sense in the comments in this section that participants feel that there is a significant lack of trust between residents and the external organisations such as the local authority, charities and others. These organisations are seen as powerful as they have the power to not only make decisions that affect the community but also because they have access to funding and a range of potential funders. Furthermore, for participants, these external organisations do not trust the ability of the local community to manage their own funding and community initiatives and are seemingly unable to recognise the capacity, skills and knowledge the community possess that could be supported to enhance community development further.

## **8.8 “Poverty of Opportunity”, Isolation, Boredom and Depression.**

Much of the literature on territorial stigmatisation describes how alienating the experience can be and how individuals may internalise the view that others hold of them to the detriment of their sense of self (Charlesworth, 2000; Featherstone, 2013; Rhodes, 2012; Slater and Anderson, 2011; Wacquant, 2007, 2008). These experiences are not simply responses to specific life difficulties or events (although these will have a bearing) but more of a permanent sense of being that links to a sense of personal value, social value and of affective autonomy and agency (Skeggs, 2004, 2011, Skeggs and Loveday, 2012). In Chapters Six and Seven I explored the ways in which participants were positive about living on the estates, here I demonstrate that there are some parallels with the experiences reported in other research as cited above. This chapter opened with Joel's statement that the problems of the estate were not spectacular or dramatic but more 'akin to to boredom and depression' which derived from people not having a sense of the 'way forward'. He powerfully

summarised this as the ‘poverty of opportunity’ which could be interpreted as the expression of some of the ways territorial stigmatisation can impact on people and communities. There were a number of occasions where participants referred to this sense of not being able to see or to find a way forward; that both aspirations and actions were restricted by the very experience of being on the estate. One participant suggested:

I think the area basically needs help so that people know what they, find out what they can do, over and above standard education. (Geoff).

In many cases the content and framing of these contributions reminded me of the points Hanley (2007) makes when she suggests that being from a council estate stays with you throughout life creating an ‘aura’ and a mindset that can’t be stepped out of and that in some ways appears to structure the way one looks at the world. For some participants there was a sense that the very experience of being from and living on the Leys created barriers to looking beyond the estate for opportunities.

I think it relates back to not looking outside very far for opportunities. And I think this place because it started as an already built community transplanted it’s an inward looking establishment. You go to school here, I mean you get off the estate to go to work, but that’s it. There isn’t a connection. (Jack).

One of the more long-standing residents, Rachel, reported that this ‘poverty of opportunity’ and ability to look beyond the immediate limitations of the estate had grown worse over the 30 years they had lived there.

I think it has changed in the sense that it's now more depressing from the point of view of prospects then I think 30 years ago, when some people were still hopeful about prospects, you know, that there was a way forward. (Rachel).

Others identified the inability to sustain social organisations and activities on the estate as what they saw as an example of how the estate tended to 'fall apart'. Where senses of powerlessness, limited opportunities and sometimes apathy all came together to limit the sustained success or operation of dance, drama, choirs and other community based organisations and clubs. In each interview I asked participants if they felt that residents could take action to change and improve aspects of living on the estate and one replied:

They could if they wanted to. There is a certain amount of apathy on the estate without a doubt. Again because people have got their own problems in life. They don't want to take on anybody else's problem. That's sad because I've been in communities where family groups support each other and they support neighbours and things like that, and it works, it really works. (Ella).

Significantly, whilst recognising elements of apathy may form, in part, and explanation for this Ella also notes the impact of residents having their 'own problems' in life resonating with the discussion in section 8.6 of this chapter where I explored the cumulative impact of multiple everyday 'life-struggles'.

## **8.9 Conclusion.**

In this chapter I have explored the issues and difficulties participants identify as impacting on their lives and those of other residents they know or know of. As the extract from Joel at the start of this chapter suggests, these issues and difficulties are

not the ‘spectacular’ ones he thinks outsiders think they are, but are more a set of limitations, obstructions and barriers that people face on a much more mundane and day-to-day basis. In many regards, for participants, these limitations, obstructions and barriers appear to stem, directly or indirectly, from aspects of territorial stigmatisation: the peripheral and relatively isolated location of the estate, the sustained impact of a poor reputation, the workings of a set of negative assumptions shared by and reinforced through repeated circulation amongst outsiders who also a lack of genuine and informed knowledge of the estate and those who live there. However, there are more conventional structural issues at work here that the participants also recognise: economic deprivation, a lack of financial resources such as low incomes, the reliance on benefits, under-employment, low pay and job insecurity. In addition the lack of access to physical resources and amenities, such as quality and affordable shops, access to transport and aspects of the spatial design and built environment also impact of the lives of residents, especially those who may already be marginalised through older age, disability, illness or their gender. All these factors contribute to the difficulties participants identified as key limitations to their everyday lives and experiences (May, 2004). In this respect I’m reminded of Hanley’s (2007:4) reflections on her own experience of growing up on an estate:

The point is that most people now have a surfeit of choice in their lives at the same time as a large minority of people have none. That large minority tends to live on council estates, whether in cities or outside them.

There is an additional set of factors that emerged in my analysis which lean more towards some of the characteristics identified by Wacquant (1996; 1998; 2008) of advanced

marginality and territorial stigmatisation at a general level and in more specific detail in other studies of specific estates and marginalised locations (see for example, Blokland, 2003, 2008; Charlesworth, 2000, 2004; Featherstone, 2013; Holmes and Manning, 2013; Rhodes, 2012; Wallace, 2007). There are some signs that participants recognise an internalisation of negative senses of collective and individual selves, of an inability to overcome the conditions they find themselves and of a growing sense of distance, alienation and of not fully belonging to the rest of the city. These sentiments are conveyed in statements such as ‘can’t see a way forward’, ‘poverty of opportunity’, ‘not looking outside’ for opportunities and the data contains a sense that comes across as disconnection, limited horizons and an area that is more depressed than it was thirty years ago (due to the absence of a way forward) which all suggest that some forms of internalisation may be taking place. Indeed, Jan sums it up quite well when she states:

So exclusion, yes, it’s exclusion is a mixture of what’s imposed on us by the way society’s structured. And what we create for ourselves, out of, out of shyness, or whatever. (Jan).

## **Chapter Nine – Conclusion.**

‘The Leys? Well they should just turn it into a big prison.’

Neighbourhood Policing Team Member, field notes April, 2015.

### **9.1 Introduction.**

This thesis has explored the phenomena and impact of ‘territorial stigmatisation’ in a large predominantly social housing estate located on the periphery of Oxford: The Leys. It has explored how ways of seeing and categorising people and places found in the academic (and other) literature map on to the views and experiences of individuals who are often written about but, perhaps, less readily asked what they think and what their experiences are. I do not claim to have given ‘voice’ to my participants but I have tried to represent the ways in which they make sense of their experiences effectively and through that process I feel I have demonstrated the value in undertaking in-depth, qualitative research and the potential it offers for making visible and better understanding the complexity of social life.

I have examined how a negative reputation of an area is constructed over time through a variety of sources, media and policy narratives and how the specific case (of the Leys) can be located within a more general set of discourses about estates, social housing and those who live there. I have also demonstrated how official narratives and descriptions of the area, informed by multiple data sets created and used by statutory bodies to ‘manage’ the issues that arise in deprived areas, can act to support these assumptions, narratives and negative reputations through an over-emphasis on ‘deficit’ modelling and through the masking of alternative or counter narratives. Of central importance to the thesis are the three data chapters which examine how participants understand, experience and respond to the ways in which the reputation of the estate is constructed by others, how they think this impacts on their lives and their community and how they feel about this ‘othering’. These chapters also examine what participants see as the strengths and weaknesses of their community, what they



like and do not like, what they value and how they narrate their everyday life experiences of living on the Leys. In addition, the third data chapter examines what participants see as the ‘real’ issues facing them and their neighbours: what life is actually like for them rather than the assumptions about the estate held by others and non-residents.

I undertook this research because, over the years of working, socialising and visiting the estate and people who live there, I have become increasingly disappointed by the ways in which the estate and its residents are ‘othered’ by those who live in other parts of the city, who work in statutory and voluntary agencies, through national and local media and through a general narrative that highlights ‘danger’, ‘failure’, ‘ignorance’, ‘fecklessness’ and other such characteristics as definitional of this area and those who live there: a set of narratives and representations which I see as a kind of careless and idle representation of people and place that has significant consequences for those who live there. I also wanted to examine how these localised narratives relate to wider narratives and representations that are advanced as general descriptions of and explanations for the deprivation and social exclusion that exists.

In Chapter One I introduced the thesis by exploring some of the historical, sociological cultural and political contexts and located my study within the longer historical narratives that have characterised representations of those who are at the lower end of the socio-economic hierarchy and where they live. This discussion was further developed in Chapter Two where I argued that there is an extended literature which focuses on the construction, representation and analysis of ‘estates’ (both council and other forms of social housing). In this chapter I examined how the concept of territorial stigmatisation has been employed in sociology and how this approach has been recently developed and refined by Wacquant into an extended analysis of large areas of social housing in the US, France and the UK. In Chapter Three I undertook an analysis of how particular discourses about the ‘poor’

had characterised popular, media, academic and political discourses over the last few decades and how different conceptions of the poor and the ‘problems’ they pose for the authorities have been narrated through terms like ‘deserving and underserving’, ‘underclass’ and ‘social exclusion’. This chapter demonstrated how policy discourses can be read as pathologising of those who are targets of certain policy and policy prescriptions and how policy is frequently informed by untested assumptions. The argument in this chapter was that it is important to trace the consistencies that can be found in these discourses and although the specific focus of policy may change there are underlying continuities that often reflect this tendency to pathologise social issues. Chapter Four explored the methods employed in the study and examined the importance of critical reflection on both the methods we choose and the way we use them to generate and analyse primary data and the processes we engaged in, as researchers, in undertaking empirical research. Chapter Five provided a brief geographic and demographic description of the Leys in order to provide further context for the presentation of the primary data analysis. I also explored some examples of how the Leys is represented in the media in general terms and in relation to the events of early September 1991 which have had such an impact on the reputation of the Leys as a problem estate over the last twenty-five years. In Chapters Six, Seven and Eight I present the findings of the detailed analysis of qualitative data generated through interviews with twenty people who live on the Leys.

This analysis reveals a wide range of issues, themes and observations that illustrate complex and nuanced reflections, understandings, views, values and emotions among participants. Overall, and in contrast to the deficit and stigmatising narratives typically found in research, policy, popular and media narratives of areas like the Leys, participants’ accounts were positive about many aspects of the estate and their neighbours. But, in Chapter Eight in particular participants report extensively on the impact of long-term economic deprivation, of the limited access they have to services and affordable retail outlets and the impact of the

peripheral location of the estate. In this concluding chapter I will discuss the key findings and themes of my research. I will reflect on the contribution my research makes to existing literature, identify potential implications for policy that can be drawn from my research and discuss the limitations. To help organise this final chapter I will refer back to my three original research questions:

First, to what extent do people who live in an area of large social housing provision experience ‘territorial stigmatisation’? Second, how do people narrate their experiences of territorial stigmatisation and how do they account for the impact on their day-to-day lives?

Third, is it possible to identify counter narratives and discourses that present alternative readings of the experiences of living in a territorially stigmatised area?

As was noted in Chapter Four, where I discussed the methods used in this study, I did not seek to answer these research questions solely through the qualitative data generated during the twenty semi-structured interviews I conducted with residents on the estate. While this interview data forms a central part of this thesis and provides a rich and detailed source of insights into how the residents I interviewed experience and understand their daily lives and where they live, this data has been located with an extensive analytical context. This analytical context developed from detailed analysis of policy documents and discourses and my own extensive experience of working on the estate and with residents and organisations who are based there.

## **9.2) To what extent do people who live in an area of large social housing provision experience ‘territorial stigmatisation’?**

My analysis provides strong evidence and numerous examples of how participants experience territorial stigmatisation. They recount how they see the area as represented negatively by local and national media, professionals and other residents of Oxford who do not live there. Some of the language they use to express this experience is strong and vivid

such as ‘whipped’, ‘a dreadful place’, ‘a damned environment’ and ‘a forest of high towers’. One participant said they felt the general reaction of people who did not live on one of the large social housing estates in Oxford when informed that they were from the Leys was one of fear and many participants provided examples of how others they knew, sometimes friends and family members from other parts of the city, demonstrate significant resistance to visiting the estate. Outsiders (professionals and lay people) were reported as holding many views, perceptions and beliefs about the estate and those who live there which, according to the participants are false. The type of territorial stigmatisation experienced by residents of the Leys is reported in other, similar, studies which were discussed in chapter two.

In particular I wanted to examine whether the claims made by Wacquant (1996, 2007, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c) can be applied to Leys and whether his model of advanced marginality and territorial stigmatisation provides a useful analytical framework in this regard. There is some evidence that aspects of advanced marginality can be identified from the data presented here. Clearly the area is territorially stigmatised in a number of ways which aligns with the first of Wacquant’s elements of advanced marginality. Furthermore, participants reported on the impact of long-term income deprivation and the life-choice restrictions these create for them and their neighbours. Participants also reflected on the lack of quality employment opportunities and the impact of low-wages, insecure employment and part-time working. In some ways these factors represent the second and fourth elements of Wacquant’s model (1996); the functional disconnection from macro-economic trends and the deregulation and degradation of wage-labour factors which have certainly impacted on the estate since major contraction of car manufacturing in the east of the city since the early 1990s (Harvey and Hayter, 1993). On the other hand, element three, territorial alienation and dissolution of place and element six, symbolic fragmentation and the loss of a shared language to address the collective problem of marginalisation are not supported by the data presented here.

Participants demonstrated a strong sense of place and of (predominantly) feeling secure in that space. Furthermore, my analysis demonstrates that participants shared an understanding and language used to articulate their experience of and resistance to marginalisation. More problematic to assess is the fifth element, the loss of a ‘hinterland’ of social networks that are accessible to those experiencing material deprivation. There is evidence in the data that participants are positive about the existence and functionality of social networks across the estate and the ability and willingness of residents to support each other. However, it is also noticeable that, with the exception of the Agnes Advice Centre and the Credit Union, knowledge of and involvement in organisations that might act as agents of collective mobilisation for the community, such as residents associations, is minimal and such organisations are not sustained. It is possible to conclude that the concepts of territorial stigmatisation and advanced marginality are best thought of as continuums or directions of travel rather than absolute, empirical descriptions of social reality.

### **9.3). How do people narrate their experiences of territorial stigmatisation and how do they account for the impact on their day-to-day lives?**

My data analysis indicates that the participants experience multiple processes of exclusion that range from income deprivation to the direct impact of the territorial stigmatisation of the estate and those who live there. The data presented in Chapter Six also clearly shows that the participants demonstrate a deep awareness of how and where they live is stigmatised and that this has a significant impact on their lives, the ways they present themselves outside the estate and how people react to them on meeting or visiting the estate for the first time. Participants also recognise the impact of the geographical isolation of the estate as an area located on the periphery of the city and outside the ring-road. I argue that they also recognise a more symbolic form of isolation – that they are not regularly visible to

the rest of the city unless it is in some way connected to negative aspects of the estate, events there or assumptions about those who live there.

However, I did not encounter the senses of alienation, dispossession, misery, muteness and silence that Charlesworth (2000) does in his study of Rotherham in which he identifies the dying of a way of life; the extinction of a kind of people' (2000:1). In similar ways I am not sure whether participants have internalised their stigmatisation to the extent that is suggested by Wacquant's work (1996, 1999, 2007, 2008a,b,c, 2009a,b, 2010) or that the area is perceived by those who live there as a social purgatory or leprous badland where only the 'refuse of society would accept to dwell' (2007:67). While outsiders may view the area this way the participants did not. However, my analysis indicates that in some ways residents of the estate articulate experiences and views that resonate with both Charlesworth (2000) and Wacquant's findings. This is not to the same extent as reported by those authors but there is evidence that the experience of multiple types of deprivation and long-term exclusion leads to an erosion of confidence, positivity and to some extent agency. In Chapter Eight in particular participants spoke of 'the poverty of opportunity' of the isolated nature of the estate, of people needing help to find out what they can do and of not looking outside the estate for opportunities. One participant, Rachel commented that in this respect the estate had changed over the last thirty years and stated:

...It's now more depressing from the point of view of prospects then I think 30 years ago, when some people were still hopeful about prospects, you know, that there was a way forward.

Blokland, writing about a subsidised housing project in New Haven, Connecticut explores the degree to which residents themselves play a significant role reproducing the

stigma they experience in terms of their relation as the marked to the markers (2008:34). Despite the positive accounts offered by participants and the defiance they display in relation to accepting the representations of the estate and themselves there is also evidence that residents may, at times, contribute to the reproduction of certain aspects of the stigmatisation and exclusion. In Chapter Eight I demonstrated how participants reported that residents could be apathetic, One participant, Jan, noted the complex interplay of external and internal processes of exclusion when she stated:

So exclusion, yes, it's exclusion ... a mixture of what's imposed on us by the way society is structured, And what we create for ourselves, out of, shyness, or whatever.

#### **9.4). Is it possible to identify counter narratives and discourses that present alternative readings of the experiences of living in a territorially stigmatised area?**

Although I am familiar with the estate (including the official crime data for the area) and have always felt the reputation of the area to be unfair and unfounded I was still surprised by the relative lack of comments from the participants on the issue of crime and anti-social behaviour. Some participants reported that there are specific areas of the estate that they might not feel safe in or would not particularly want to visit at night. As we also saw in Chapter Six some participants had some very negative experiences related to drug dealing and use on the estate. However, participants did not focus on these issues, they formed a small part of the interviews (if they came up at all) and issues of crime and anti-social behaviour do not dominate the narratives of the participants. Indeed, these issues were heavily out-weighed by much stronger and extensive positive comments about feelings of being safe on the estate. I think this is an important point not only because it contradicts many of the assumptions and beliefs held by 'outsiders' but because it indicates the need for

balanced consideration of the issues people face and how they experience them in any given community. Clearly there is crime and anti-social behaviour on the estate and some participants have some concerns about these issues but they are not excessive, are similar to general levels of concern and anxiety characteristic of others areas of the city.

A particular strength of the data was the range and diversity of micro-counter-narratives and counter-practices that residents displayed which can be seen to act as forms of resistance (Scott, 1985, 1990; Tyler 2013). There are numerous examples but a number stand out in particular. These include Mags's reflections on the gift for a local fund-raising raffle of a £10 voucher from the large 24 hour Tesco store located on the retail park on the edge of the estate. She reflects on how Tesco must make millions of pounds profit from the residents of the estate and yet give so little back. She notes 'we didn't use (the voucher) we framed it. We framed it as a piece of art'. The multiple interpretations of the 'riots' and 'hotting' episodes also demonstrate both counter-narratives about the estate, its history and those who live there and also a knowing comprehension of how external organisations, for example television news media, can work to exploit social issues and some social groups. Examples of these micro-counter narratives and practices can be found in the language, humour and reflections of the participants throughout Chapters Six, Seven and Eight and provide a rich source of how people articulate and respond to the imbalances of power and resources they often encounter in everyday life (Tyler, 2013).

#### **9.5). Relevance of this Study to Current Policy and Scholarly Debates.**

My research contributes to current scholarly debates regarding territorial stigmatisation both as a theoretical contribution and in terms of the presentation of an empirically informed case study. In terms of the theoretical contribution my work represents a more nuanced exploration of how territorial stigmatisation is experienced by residents of a stigmatised area. In this context my research contributes directly to the analysis and debates



advanced by Wacquant (1996, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2016) as well as some of the more recent work undertaken in the UK by, for example, Gray and Mooney (2011), McKenzie (2012, 2015), Rhodes (2012), Slater and Anderson (2012), Hancock and Mooney (2013). Furthermore, the research adds to the growing number of qualitative studies of specific communities and residents' experiences of living in these communities in both the UK (see for example, Charlesworth (2000), Smith (2005), Bond (2011), Rogaly and Taylor (2011), Rhodes (2012), McKenzie (2012, 2015) Featherstone (2013), as well as the growing international work in this area (see for example, Beach and Sernhede (2011), Garbin and Millington (2012), Jensen and Christensen (2012)).

This research contributes to the arguments recently advanced by Tyler (2103) in terms of providing further illustration of how certain representational forms contribute to the production of marginality and social exclusion. My work also resonates with Tyler's arguments (drawing on Ranciere, 2004) about the importance of recognising the power of naming, classification and construction of people as 'figurative scapegoats' and how important it is for these processes to be critically engaged with and resisted. Challenging these processes is not straightforward, especially when they form such staples of popular culture, journalism and political rhetoric (Skeggs, and Wood, 2012, Tyler, 2013). However, this does not negate the need for critical discourse analysis of popular cultural texts and other representations along with the production of more positive counter-narratives that challenge these processes.

The ways in which the stigmatisation of the estate persists and the impact of the negative reputation associated with the area and residents also links to arguments advanced by, for example, Dean and Hastings (2000), Hastings and Dean, (2003), Hastings (2004), Devereux et al., (2011, 2012) on the need for serious attention to be paid to the issue of an areas reputation when engaging in regeneration activities. Harte and Turner demonstrate how

digital media and what they call ‘hyperlocal’ media can be used to counter historical reputational issues. They report how citizen journalists can populate new digital spaces with new and more positive stories of areas historically constructed negatively (2016:131). Clearly there is significant potential for social and digital media to be used to present counter-narratives of territorially stigmatised areas. However, two limitations are demonstrated by the empirical data reported here. First, local and community journalism, albeit in the more traditional form of a free sheet newspaper – *The Leys News* - has provided alternative and positive readings of the estate for many years but the penetration of this medium outside of the estate (even amongst professionals and practitioners who visit the regularly visit the estate) appears to be minimal. Second, as reports in relation to existing digital media platforms from residents demonstrate (see, for example Rachel’s comments on page 162 or Liz’s on page 164-5) these can be used for the continued dissemination of negative discourse, comments and stories about the estate as readily as positive ones. So whilst not denying the potential value of new communication technologies, the exact form citizen and resident journalism and digital activism might take requires further thought and careful design.

Speed, et al.(2016) also focus on the potential opportunities offered by digital media to engage and challenge contemporary forms of governance and negative representations of estates, communities and their residents through the concepts and vocabularies emerging online. They take, as their case study, an innovative public artwork project in Wester Hailes, Edinburgh. These authors argue that community-generated public art and the public participation engendered by such projects embodies the resilience of individuals and the community and can facilitate ways of addressing society’s everyday challenges through both online and offline communities (Speed, et al., 2016: 160). Once again, the potential of new and emergent forms of digital and online media platforms and formats may well be harnessed

to the development and dissemination of more positive, counter-narratives and creative projects that can challenge established negative representations, assumptions and perceptions.

Crucially policy and practical interventions need to go beyond the confines of regeneration initiatives and widen out to include more consistent and sustained approaches to countering the existence of negative reputations and territorial stigmatisation. How this should be achieved in policy and practical terms is less clear but developing such an approach at national and local levels in this way has important implications for estates and stigmatised areas across the country. Countering negative reputations and territorial stigmatisation will be an on-going activity and as stated above, it is not easy to identify how best this could be achieved. However, I propose some possible ways that this might be approached below.

Approaches to town planning and development need to take full account of local contexts, concerns and views in ways that ensure communities are not only consulted but that their needs and desires (in terms of social amenities, open spaces and retail options) are fully considered and that proposals respond too and incorporate the everyday needs and aspirations of residents.

The commitment to meaningful community and resident engagement in policy interventions that was such a central element of the New Deal for Communities approach needs to be fully enacted and sustained. Meaningful engagement needs to accompany both direct and indirect policy interventions (for example area-based regeneration initiatives) are undertaken in all communities but especially those where significant deprivation and marginalisation are found. This engagement needs to go beyond simple community consultation, street surveys and questionnaires to engage directly with not only the main concerns and aspirations of residents but to listen to and engage with the ways in which communities narrate, express and evaluate their communities and the needs of those communities and residents. This approach will potentially work more effectively where

engagement includes community assets (human and non-human) audits, historical reflection and critical review of previous policy interventions. It requires a much more creative and imaginative approach by policy makers and practitioners as well as a willingness to explore both the meaning of community and locality to residents as well as commitment to a more open-ended approach to developing and implementing policy interventions and a commitment to including community ideas and conceptions of what successful intervention outcomes would look like. Furthermore such an approach will require innovative approaches to project governance (Henderson 2012) as well as a recognition and valuing of local and resident knowledge and expertise as well as external, ‘professional’ and practitioner knowledge (Jones, et al., 2016).

#### **9.6). Reflections on My Study and Future Research**

The experience of conducting this research and engaging in the fieldwork has re-affirmed my view that fieldwork, interviewing and listening to people are critical to the maintenance of a reflective, informed and meaningful sociology. There is a specific need to hear what people have to say about their lives and experiences, to listen to their stories, their humour, resilience and humanity. It is also important that both researchers and policy makers do not write people and their lived experiences (wittingly or unwittingly) out of our accounts, analysis and arguments and our theoretical analysis of the social world as well as in the shaping and implementation of policy. This includes resisting or at least critically engaging with narrow classificatory systems and naming of people in ways that negate their personhood (Ranciere 2004; Tyler 2013).

My study has highlighted a number of potential future research projects. Importantly, this research has demonstrated that there is an absence of a systematic and comparative review of qualitative studies of the experiences of people who live in social housing. There is a growing evidence base of such studies and many of them report significant differences

between official discourses about these places and the experiences of those who actually live there. During my research I have been in contact with a number of researchers who have undertaken similar research in different parts of the UK, Europe and the US. In the main I have been struck by the sense that these researchers assume that the areas they have studied are somehow relatively unique or at least distinctly related to the area they have worked in. While the context of specific locations is clearly important there is clearly scope for greater comparative work regarding territorial stigmatisation across a wide-range of countries and areas.

It is also important to explore how to develop an asset based assessment tool for areas such as these as a counter-weight to the deficit modelling of areas that are experiencing economic deprivation but still have many positive and valuable assets. My research suggests that these assets are often to be found in the people who live in these areas. However, this is a complex problem as the current system of allocating funds and resources relies on creating the most deficit informed narrative one can - which penalises the creation of an asset based approach – but these two approaches should go hand-in-hand. The clear experience of deprivation in material terms (as reflected in the data in this study) does not equate to a lack of other assets: participants repeatedly demonstrate the depth of value in their lives as well as resilience, community commitment and creativity in relation to their everyday lives and experiences.

As stated earlier, a significant part of my motivation in undertaking this study was, as Back argues in the *Art of Listening*, my belief we need a sociology that pays more attention to the fragments of the everyday, one that admits the voices and stories of those not normally heard. As Byrne also notes ‘in a complex world stories matter’ (2011: 31). However, the art of listening needs to be practiced by local authorities, planning practitioners and policy

makers and reflect a genuine commitment to recognising and valuing the personhood and value of all those effected by their interventions (Skeggs 2011, Skeggs and Loveday 2012).

It is important, particularly given the strictures that increasingly govern the approach to research in universities, such as the Research Excellence Framework, the increasing emphasis on impact and the drive to harness social research to the service of policy makers and other powerful external ‘stakeholders’, that qualitative research which involves listening to people’s everyday experiences and narratives, is pursued. The social researcher has no moral superiority over the stories that are generated in such research but they do have access to channels through which voices can be heard and challenges to more powerful discourses can be articulated. This should not be interpreted as some form of ‘heroic’ role for the researcher but one of social and political necessity (Swaminathan and Mulvihill 2017). Ideally, the knowledge developed in such studies will be seen as co-produced by participants and researcher(s) and it will be acknowledged that the researcher does not occupy a privileged position in relation to the participants or the research outcomes generated but that they do have the privilege of access to some forms of power that can be used to offer counter-narratives, balance and, hopefully, continue to challenge established assumptions, ideological positions and if not structural injustice at least elements of representational injustice. I do not claim to have achieved this in this study but I hope I have taken some steps in the right direction.

## References.

- Abu-Lughod, J., (2007), 'The challenge of comparative case studies' *City*, 11, (3), pp399-404.
- Adamson, D., and Bromley, R., (2013), 'Community Empowerment: Learning from Practice in Community Regeneration', *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 26, (3), pp190-202.
- Agier, M., (2009), 'The Ghetto, the Hyperghetto and the Fragmentation of the World' *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 33, (3), pp854-7.
- Allan, G and Phillipson, C, (2008), 'Community Studies today: Urban Perspectives' *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 11, (2), pp163-73.
- Allen, C., Powell, R., Casey, R., and Coward, S., (2007), "'Ordinary, the Same as Anywhere Else": Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity in 'Marginal' Middle-Class Neighbourhoods', *Sociology*, 41, (2), 239-58.
- Amin, A, (2005), 'Local Community on Trial' *Economy and Society*, 34, (4), pp612-33.
- Amin, A., and Graham, S., (1997), 'The Ordinary City', *Transactions*, 22, (4), pp411-29.
- Anderson, (2006), *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (Revised Edition), London, Verso.
- M., Andrews, C., Squire and M., Tamboukou, (Eds), (2013), *Doing Narrative Research*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Sage, London.
- Arthurson, K, (2001), 'Achieving Social Justice in Estate Regeneration: The Impact of Physical Image Construction', *Housing Studies*, 16, (6), pp807-26.
- Atkinson, P and Delamont, S, (2006), 'In the roiling smoke: qualitative inquiry and contested fields' *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 19,(6), pp747-55
- Atkinson, R, (1999), 'Discourses of Partnership and Empowerment in Contemporary British Urban Regeneration', *Urban Studies*, 36, (1), pp 59-72.
- Atkinson, R, (2000), 'Narratives of Policy: the Construction of Urban Problems and Urban Policy in the Official Discourse of British Government 1968-1998,' *Critical Social Policy*, 20, (2), pp211-32.
- Atkinson R., and G., Helms, (Eds), (2007), *Securing and Urban Renaissance: Crime, Community and British Urban Policy*, Bristol, Policy Press.
- Atkinson, P and Hoiusley, W., (2003), *Interactionism: An Essay in Sociological Amnesia*, London, Sage.
- Atkinson, R. and K. Jacobs (2010) "Damned by Place, then by Politics: Spatial

Disadvantage and the Housing Policy-Research Interface”, *International Journal of Housing Policy* 10 (2): pp155-171.

Atkinson, R and Kintrea, K, (2001), ‘Disentangling Area Effects: Evidence from Deprived and Non-deprived Neighbourhoods’ *Urban Studies*, 38, (12), pp2277-98.

Atkinson, P., and Housley, W., (2003), *Interactionism*, London, Sage.

Audit Commission, (2010), *Audit Commission Progress Report: Oxford 2008/9 and 2009/10*, London, Audit Commission.

Back, L (2007), *The Art of Listening*, London, Routledge.

Baeten, G, (2002), ‘Hypochondriac Geographies of the City and the New Urban Dystopia’, *City*, 6, (1), pp103-15.

Baeten, G., (2004), ‘Inner-City Misery’, *City*, 8, (2), pp235-41

Bagguley, P and Mann, K, (1992), ‘Idle, Thieving Bastards: Scholarly Representations of the Underclass’ *Work, Employment and Society*, 6, (1), pp113-26.

Barbour, R., (2001), ‘Checklists for Improving Rigour in Qualitative Research: A Case of the Tail Wagging the Dog?’, *British Medical Journal*, 322, pp1115-17.

Barke, M., and Turnbull, G., (1992), *Meadowell: The Biography of an ‘Estate with Problems’*, Avebury, Aldershot.

Bauder, H., (2002), ‘Neighbourhood Effects and Cultural Exclusion’, *Urban Studies*, 39, (1), pp85-93.

Bauman, Z., (1987), *Legislators and Interpreters: On Modernity, Postmodernity and Intellectuals*, Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press

Bauman, Z., (1998), *Work, consumerism and the New Poor*, Philadelphia: Open University Press

Bauman, Z., (2002), *Society Under Siege*, Cambridge, Polity Press.

Bauman, Z., (2004), *Identity: Conversations with Benedetto Vecchi*, Cambridge, Polity Press.

Beach, D. and O. Sernhede (2011) “From Learning to Labour to Learning for Marginality: School Segregation and Marginalization in Swedish Suburbs”, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 32, (2), pp257-74.

Bechhofer, F., and Paterson, L., (2000), *Principles of Research Design in the Social Sciences*, London, Routledge.

Becker, H., (1967), ‘Who’s Side Are We On?’, *Social Problems*, 14, (3), pp 239-47.



Becker, H., (1998), *Tricks of the Trade: How to think about your research when you're doing it*, Chicago, Chicago University Press.

Bell, C and Newby, H, (1971), *Community Studies: An Introduction to the Sociology of the Local Community*, George Allen and Unwin, London.

Benn, M., (2000), 'New Labour and Social Exclusion', *The Political Quarterly*, 71, (3), pp309-18.

Bennett, S. (2000) "The Possibility of a Beloved Place: Residents and Placemaking in Public Housing Communities" *Saint Louis University Public Law Review* 19, pp259-71

Blokland, T., (2003), *Urban Bonds: Social Relationships in an Inner City Neighbourhood*, Cambridge, Polity Press.

Blokland, T., (2008), "'You Got to Remember you Live in Public Housing': Place-Making in an American Housing Project', *Housing, Theory and Society*, 25, (1), pp31-46.

Bloor, M, (1997), 'Addressing Social Problems through Qualitative Research' in D., Silverman, (Ed), *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice*, London, Sage, pp221-238.

Blumer, H., (1966), 'The Sociological Implications of the Thought of George Herbert Mead', *American Journal of Sociology*, 71, (5), pp535-44.

Blumer, H., (1969), *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice-Hall.

Bochel, H., and M. Powell, (Eds), (2016), *The Coalition Government and Social Policy: Restructuring the Welfare State*, Bristol, Policy Press.

Boland, P., (2008), 'The Construction of Images of People and Place: Labelling Liverpool and Stereotyping Scousers', *Cities*, 25, pp355-69.

Bond, S., (2011), 'Being in Myth and Community: Resistance, Lived Existence and Democracy in a North England Mill Town', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 29, pp780-802.

Bonnett, A., (1998), 'How the British Working Class Became White: The Symbolic (Re)formation of Racilized Capitalism', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 11, (3), pp 316-40.

Booth, C., (2009)[1903], *Life and Labour of the People in London*, Charleston, SC., Bibliolife.

Borer, M. I. (2010) "From Collective Memory to Collective Imagination: Time, Place, and Urban Redevelopment", *Symbolic Interaction* 33 (1), pp96-114.

Bourdieu, P., (1984), *Distinction*, London, Routledge.

- Bourdieu, P. (1990), *The Logic of Practice*, Stanford, Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P., et al., (1999), *Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society*, Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Bourke, J., (1994), *Working-Class Cultures in Britain, 1980-1960*, London, Routledge.
- Brah, A., (2007), 'Non-binarized Identities of Similarity and Difference' in M., Wetherell, M. Lafleche and R. Barkley, (eds), *Identity, Ethnic Diversity and Community Cohesion*, London, Sage.
- Brannstrom, L., (2004), 'Poor Places, Poor Prospects? Counterfactual Models of Neighbourhood Effects on Social Exclusion in Stockholm', *Urban Studies*, 41, pp2515-37.
- Brattbakk, I. and Hansen, T. (2004) "Post-war large housing estates in Norway: well-kept residential areas still stigmatised?" *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*, 19, pp311-332
- Brent, J., (1997), "It's all right 'round here if you're local": community in the inner city' in Hoggett, P., (Ed), *Contested Communities: Experiences, Struggles, Policies*, Bristol, Policy Press, pp51-67.
- Brent, J., (2009), *Searching for Community: Representation, Power and Action on an Urban Estate*, Bristol, Policy Press.
- Broughton, K., Berkeley, N., and Jarvis, D., (2013), 'Where Next for Neighbourhood Regeneration in England? Two Years On', *Local Economy*, 28, (7-8), pp817-27.
- Buck, N., (2001), 'Identifying Neighbourhood Effects on Social Exclusion' *Urban Studies*, 38, (12), pp2251-75.
- Buckingham, A., (1999), 'Is there an Underclass in Britain' *British Journal of Sociology*, 50, (1), pp49-75.
- Bullock, H., Fraser Wyche, K., and Williams, W.R., (2001), 'Media Images of the Poor' *Journal of Social Issues*, 57, (2), pp229-46.
- Bunar, N. (2011) "Multicultural Urban Schools in Sweden and Their Communities: Social Predicaments, the Power of Stigma, and Relational Dilemmas", *Urban Education* 46, (2), pp141-64.
- Burchardt, T., Le Grand, J., and Piachaud, D., (1999). 'Social Exclusion in Britain 1991-1995', *Social Policy and Administration*, 33, (3), pp227-44.
- Burke, K., (1989), *On Symbols and Society*, Chicago, Chicago University Press.

Burton, P, Croft, J, Hastings, A, Slater, T, Goodlad, R, Abbott, J and MacDonald, G, (2004), *What Works in Community Involvement in Area-Based Initiatives: A Systematic Review of the Literature*, London, Home Office.

Byrne, D, (1997), 'Social Exclusion and Capitalism: The Reserve Army Across Time and Space', *Critical Social Policy*, 50, (17), pp 27-51

Byrne, D., (2011), *Applying Social Science: The Role of Social Research in Politics, Policy and Practice*, Bristol, Policy Press.

Caldeira, T., (2009), 'Marginality, Again ?!' *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 33, (3), pp848-53.

Camina, M., (2004), *Understanding and Engaging Deprived Communities*, London, Home Office.

Campbell, B (1993), *Goliath: Britain's Dangerous Places*, London, Methuen.

Campbell, C., and Deacon, H., (2006), 'Unravelling the Contexts of Stigma: From Internalisation to Resistance to Change', *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, 16, pp411-17.

Campkin, B., (2013), *Remaking London: Decline and Regeneration in Urban Culture*, London, I.B. Tauris.

Casey, L., (2012), *Listening to Troubled Families*, London, Department of Communities and Local Government.

Charlesworth, S., (2000), *A Phenomenology of Working Class Experience*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Charmaz, C., (2006), *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*, London, Sage.

Chatterton, P., (2007), 'Banlieues, the Hyperghetto and Advanced Marginality: A Symposium on Loic Wacquant's *Urban Outcasts*', *City*, 11, (3), pp 357-59.

Clarke, J, (2005), 'New Labour's Citizens: Activated, Empowered, Responsibilized, Abandoned?', *Critical Social Policy*, 25, (4), pp 447-63.

Clarke, N., and Cochrane, A., (2013), 'Geographies and Politics of Localism: The Localism of the United Kingdom's Coalition Government', *Political Geography*, 34, pp10-23.

Clement, M., (2007), 'Bristol: 'Civilising' the Inner City', *Race and Class*, 48, (4), pp97-114.

Cohen, S., (2002), *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of Mods and Rockers*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed., London, Routledge.

Cohen, A., (1985), *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, London, Routledge.

Coffey, A and Atkinson, P, (1996), *Making Sense of Qualitative Data: Complementary Research Strategies*, London, Sage.

Coffield, F., Robinson, P., and Sarsby, J., (1980), *A Cycle of Deprivation: A Case Study of Four Families*, London, Heinman.

Coleman, (1990), *Utopia on Trial*, London, Shipman.

Coleman, R, (2004), 'Watching the Degenerate: Street Camera Surveillance and Urban Regeneration' *Local Economy*, 19, (3), pp199-211.

Collins, C, (1997), 'The Dialogics of 'Community': Language and Identity in a Housing Scheme in the West of Scotland', in P., Hoggett, (Ed), *Contested Communities: Experiences, Struggles, Policies*, Bristol, Policy Press, pp84-104.

Corcoran, M., (2014), 'Liveability and the Lifeworld of the Social Housing Neighbourhood', in M., Norris, (Ed), *Social Housing, Disadvantage and Neighbourhood Liveability: Ten Years of Change in Social Housing Neighbourhoods*, Routledge, London, pp 41-63.

Coy, M., (2006), 'This Morning I'm A Researcher, this Afternoon I'm an Outreach Worker: Ethical Dilemmas in Practitioner Research' , *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 9(5), pp419-31.

Craig, G, (2007), "Community Capacity-Building: Something Old, Something New...?" *Critical Social Policy*, 27, pp335-359.

Crotty, M., (1998), *Foundations of Social Research*, London, Sage.

Crow, G., (1997), 'What do we know about the neighbours? Sociological perspectives on neighbouring and community' in P., Hoggett, (Ed), *Contested Communities: Experiences, Struggles, Policies*, Bristol, Policy Press, p17-32.

Crow, G, (1999), 'Developing sociological arguments through community studies' *International Journal Social Research Methodology*, 3, (3), pp173-87.

Cruddas, J., and Byrne, L., (2013), 'The Condition of Britain: A New Politics of Society for the Centre-Left', *Public Policy Research*, 19, (4), ppp217-25.

Crump, J. (2002) "Deconcentration by Demolition: Public housing, Poverty, and Urban Policy" *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 20, pp581-96.

Crump, J. (2003) "The End of Public Housing as We Know It: Public Housing Policy, Labour Regulation and the US City", *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 27, (1), pp179-87.

Damer, S., (1974), 'Wine Alley: The Sociology of a Dreadful Enclosure', *Sociological Review*, 22, (2), pp221-48.

- Damer, S., (1989), *From Moorpark to Wine Alley: The Rise and Fall of a Glasgow Housing Scheme*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.
- Dangschat, J., (2009), 'Space Matters – Marginalization and Its Places', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 33, (3), pp835-40.
- Darcy, M. (2010) "Deconcentration of Disadvantage and Mixed-Income Housing: A Critical Discourse Approach", *Housing, Theory & Society*, 27, pp1-22.
- Davies, J and Imbroscio, D, (Eds), (2009), *Theories of Urban Politics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed, London, Sage.
- Davis, H, (2001), 'Inspector Morse and the Business of Crime', *Television & New Media*, 2, pp133-48
- Day, G, (2006), *Community and Everyday Life*, London, Routledge.
- Dean, H, (1992), 'Poverty Discourses and the Disempowerment of the Poor' *Critical Social Policy*, 35, pp78-9.
- Dean, J, and Hastings, A, (2000), *Challenging Images: Housing Estates, Stigma and Regeneration*, Bristol, Policy Press.
- Dean, H., and Taylor Gooby, P., (1992), *Dependency Culture: The Explosion of a Myth*, Hemel Hempstead, Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Deas, I., (2013), 'Towards Post-political Consensus in Urban Policy? Localism and the Emerging Agenda for Regeneration under the Cameron Government', *Planning, Practice and Research*, 28, (1), pp65-82.
- Denzin, N, (2008), 'The New Paradigm Dialogs and Qualitative Inquiry' *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 21, (4), pp315-25.
- Denzin, N., and Giardina, M., (Eds), (2008), *Qualitative Inquiry and the Politics of Evidence*, Walnut Creek, CA, Left Coast Press.
- Denzin, N., and Lincoln, Y., (Eds), (2003), *The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., London, Sage.
- Denzin, N., and Lincoln, Y., (Eds), (2003), *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., London, Sage.
- Denzin, N., and Lincoln, Y., (Eds), (2003), *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., London, Sage.
- Denzin, N., and Lincoln, Y., (Eds), (2005), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, London, Sage.
- Department for Communities and Local Government, (2008a), *Communities in Control: Real people, real power*, Cm 7427, London, TSO.

Department for Communities and Local Government, (2008b), *Communities in Control: Real people, Real power*, Evidence Annex, London, TSO.

Department for Communities and Local Government, (2008c), *Transforming places: changing lives – A framework for regeneration*, London, TSO.

Department of Communities and Local Government, (2009a), *Understanding the Different Roles of Deprived Neighbourhoods: A Typology*, London, DCLG.

Department of Communities and Local Government, (2009b), *The NDC Programme: Outputs and Expenditure Over the Period 1999-2007: Evidence from the New Deal for Communities Programme*, London, DCLG.

Department of Communities and Local Government, (2012), *The Troubled Families Programme*, London, DCLG.

Department of the Environment, (1993), *Crime Prevention on Housing Council Estates*, London, HMSO.

Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions, (1999), *Towards and Urban Renaissance. Final Report of the Urban Task Force*, London, Spon/The Stationery Office.

Devault, (1990), 'Talking and Listenining from Women's Standpoint: Feminist Strategives for Interveiwing and Analysys', *Social Problems*, 37, (1), pp96-116.

Devereux, E., Haynes, A. & Power M. (2011) "At the Edge: Media Constructions of a Stigmatised Irish Housing Estate", *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*, 26, (2), pp123-42.

Devereux E., Haynes, A., Power, M. (2012) "Tarring Everyone with the Same Shorthand? Journalists, Stigmatization and Social Exclusion", *Journalism* 13, (4), 500-17.

Diamond, J, (2004), 'Local Regeneration Initiatives and Capacity Building: Whose 'Capacity' and 'Building' for What?', *Community Development Journal*, 39, (2), pp177-89.

Dillon, D., and Fanning, B., (2015), 'Tottenham After the Riots: The Chimera of Community and the Property-led Regeneration of "Broken Britain"', *Critical Social Policy*, 35, (2), pp188-206.

Dingwall, (1997), 'Accounts, Interviews and Observations' in G. Miller and R. Dingwall, (eds), *Context and Method in Qualitative Research*, London, Sage.

Dixon, J, Carrier, K and Dogan, R, (2005), 'On Investigating the 'Underclass': Contending Philosophical Perspectives' *Social Policy and Society*, 4, (1), pp21-30.

Duneier, M, (1999), *Sidewalk*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York.

- Edelman, M., (1985), *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*, (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed), Chicago, University of Illinois Press.
- Ellison, N., (2016), 'The Coalition Government, Public Spending and Social Policy' in Bochel, H., and M. Powell, (Eds), *The Coalition Government and Social Policy: Restructuring the Welfare State*, Bristol, Policy Press, pp27-51.
- Emmel, N., (2013), *Sampling and Choosing Cases in Qualitative Research: A Realist Approach*, London, Sage.
- Engles, F., (2009), [1845], *The Condition of the English Working Class*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Etzioni A, (1991), *The Spirit of Community: Rights, Responsibilities and the Communitarian Agenda*, New York, Crown Publishers.
- Etzioni A, (1996), 'The responsive community: A communitarian perspective', *American Sociological Review*, 61, pp1–11.
- Evans, K., (1997), "'It's all right 'round here if you're a local": Community in the Inner City', in P., Hoggett, (Ed), *Contested Communities: Experiences, Struggles, Policies*, Bristol, Policy Press, pp33-50.
- Evans, K., (2011), "'Big Society" in the UK: A Policy Review', *Children and Society*, 25, pp164-71.
- Exit Photography Group, (1982), *Survival Programmes in Britain's Inner Cities*, Milton Keynes, Open University Press.
- Fairclough, N, (2000), *New Labour, New Language*, London, Routledge.
- Fairclough, N, (2003), *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*, London Routledge.
- Farley, P and Griffiths, N, (2008), 'Netherley: Escaping the Inner City' in *Granta: The New Nature Writing*, 102, London, Granta, pp150-69.
- Fahey, T., Norris, M., and Field, C., (2014), 'Introduction' in M., Norris, (Ed), *Social Housing, Disadvantage and Neighbourhood Liveability: Ten Years of Change in Social Housing Neighbourhoods*, Routledge, London, pp1-22.
- Featherstone, M, (2013), 'Being-in-Hull, Being-on-Bransholme', *City*, 17, (2), pp179-96.
- Field, P.A., and Morse, J., (1985). *Nursing research: The Application of Qualitative Approaches*, Chapman and Hall.
- Finnegan, R., (1998), *Tales of the City: A Study of Narrative and Urban Life*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Flint, J., (2009), 'Cultures, Ghettos and Camps: Sites of Exception and Antagonism in the City', *Housing Studies*, 24, (4), pp417-31.

Fontana, A., and Frey, J., (1994), 'Interviewing: The Art of Science', in N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln, (eds), *The Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Thousand Oaks, Sage.

Fontana, A., and Frey, J., (2003), 'The Interview: From Structured Questions to Negotiated Text' in N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln, (eds), *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed), London, Sage, pp61-106.

Forest, R., and Kearns, A., (1999), *Joined-Up Places: Social Cohesion and Neighbourhood Regeneration*, York, Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Foster, J., and Hope, T., (1993), *Housing, Community and Crime: the Impact of the Priority Estates Project*, London, HMSO.

Foucault, M., (1970), *The Order of Things*, Andover, Hants, Tavistock.

Fraser, P., (1996), 'Social and Spatial Relationships and the "Problem" Inner City: Moss Side in Manchester' *Critical Social Policy*, 16, pp43-65.

Frankenberg, R., (1966), *Communities in Britain: Social Life in Town and Country*, Harmondsworth, Penguin.

Fremaux, I., (2005), 'New Labour's Appropriation of the Concept of Community: A Critique', *Community Development Journal*, 40, (3), pp265-74.

Friedrichs, J., Galster, G and Musterd, S., (2003), 'Neighbourhood Effects on Social Opportunities: The European and American Research and Policy Context', *Housing Studies*, 18, (6), pp797-806.

Furbey, R., (1999), 'Urban 'Regeneration': Reflections on a Metaphor', *Critical Social Policy*, 19, (4), pp419-445.

Galster, G., (2001), 'On the Nature of Neighbourhood', *Urban Studies*, 38, (2), pp2111-24.

Garbin, D. and Millington, G. (2012) "Territorial Stigma and the Politics of Resistance in a Parisian *Banlieue*: La Courneuve and Beyond", *Urban Studies* 49 (10), pp2067-83.

Garrett, P., (2007), 'Sinbin' Solutions: The 'Pioneer' Projects for 'Problem Families' and the Forgetfulness of Social Policy Research', *Critical Social Policy*, 27, (2), pp203-30.

Gaskell, G., (2000), Individual and group interviewing. Qualitative researching with text, image and sound, pp.38-56.

Geertz, C., (1973), *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York, Basic Books.



- Gergen, M., and Gergen, K., (2003), 'Qualitative Inquiry: Tensions and Transformations', in N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln, (eds), *The Landscape of Qualitative Research*, Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage, pp 575-610.
- Gerring, J., (2001), *Social Science Methodology: A Critical Framework*, Cam
- Giddens, A., (1973), *The Class Structure of Advanced Societies*, New York, Harper Row.
- Glasgow, D., (1987), *The Black Underclass: Poverty, Unemployment and Entrapment of Ghetto Youth*, New York, Vintage Press.
- Glaser, B., and Strauss, A., (1967), *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, Chicago, Aldine.
- Glasze, G., Putz, R., Germes, M., Schirmel, H. and Brailich, A. (2012) "'The Same But Not The Same': The Discursive Constitution of Large Housing Estates in Germany, France and Poland", *Urban Geography* 33 (8): pp1192-11.
- Goffman, E., (1963), *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, NJ, Prentice Hall.
- Gray, N. and G. Mooney (2011) "Glasgow's New Urban Frontier: 'Civilising' the Population of 'Glasgow East'", *City* 15 (1): pp4-24.
- Greenberg, M. and Hollander, J. (2006) "Neighborhood Stigma Twenty Years Later: Revisiting Superfund Sites in Suburban New Jersey", *The Appraisal Journal* 74,(2), pp161-173.
- Gregg, P., (2011), 'New Labour and Inequality', *The Political Quarterly*, 81, pp S17-S30.
- Guest, G., Bunce, A. and Johnson, L., ( 2006), 'How Many Interviews are Enough? An Experiment with Data Saturation and Variability' , *Field Methods*, 18(1), pp.59-82.
- Haase, T., (2014), 'Changing Disadvantage in Social Housing: A Multi-Level Analysis', in Norris, M., (Ed), *Social Housing, Disadvantage and Neighbourhood Liveability: Ten Years of Change in Social Housing Neighbourhoods*, Routledge, London, pp23-41.
- Hammersley, M., (1995), *The Politics of Social Research*, London, Routledge.
- Hammersely, M., (2011), *Methodology: Who Needs It?* London, Sage.
- Hammersley, M., (2014), *The Limits of Social Science: Causal Explanation and Value Relevance*, London, Sage.
- Hammett, C., and Butterm T., (2013), 'Re-Classifying London: A Growing Middle Class and Increasing Inequality', *City*, 17, (2), pp197-208.
- Hancock, L., Mooney, G., and Neal, S., (2012), 'Crisis Social Policy and the Resilience of the Concept of Community', *Critical Social Policy*, 32, (3), pp343-64.

Hancock, L. and Mooney, G. (2013) "'Welfare Ghettos' and the 'Broken Society': Stigmatization in the Contemporary UK", *Housing, Theory and Society*, 30, (1), pp46-64.

Hanley, L. (2007), *Estates: An Intimate History*, London, Granta.

Harte, D., and Turner, J., (2016), 'Lessons from 'The Vale' – the Role of Hyperlocal Media in Shaping Reputational Geographies', in O'Brien, D and P., Matthews, (Eds), *After Urban Regeneration: Communities, Policy and Place*, Bristol, Policy Press, pp131-45.

Harvey, D., (1989), 'From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: The Transformation in Urban Governance in Late Capitalism', *Geografiska Annaler, Series B Human Geography*, 71, (1), pp3-17.

Harvey, D and Hayter, T, (eds), (1993), *The Factory in the City: the Story of the Cowley Automobile Workers in Oxford*, Brighton, Mansell.

Harvey, D and Swyngedouw, E, (1993), 'Industrial Restructuring, Community Development and Grass-roots Resistance', T., Hayter and D., Harvey, (Eds), *The Factory and the City: The Story of the Cowley Automobile Workers in Oxford*, London, Mansell, pp11-25

Hastings, A., (1998), 'Connecting Linguistic Structures and Social Practices: a Discursive Approach to Social Policy Analysis', *Journal of Social Policy*, 27, (2), pp191-211.

Hastings, A., (2004), 'Stigma and Social Housing Estates: Beyond Pathological Explanations', *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*, 19, pp233-254.

Hastings, A., and Dean, J., (2003), 'Challenging Images: Tackling Stigma through Estate Regeneration', *Policy and Politics*, 31, (2), pp171-184.

Hatherley, O., (2012), *A New Kind of Bleak: Journeys Through Urban Britain*, London, Verso.

Haylett, C., (2001), 'Illegitimate Subjects?: Abject Whites, Neoliberal Modernization, and Middle- Class Multiculturalism', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 19, pp351-70.

Haynes, A., Devereux, E., and Power, M., (2014), 'Media Representations, Stigma and Neighbourhood Identity', in M., Norris, (Ed), *Social Housing, Disadvantage and Neighbourhood Liveability: Ten Years of Change in Social Housing Neighbourhoods*, Routledge, London, pp192-218.

Henderson, S., (2012), 'An Evaluation of the Layering and Legacy of Area-based Regeneration Initiatives in England: The Case of Wolverhampton', *Urban Studies*, 49, (6), pp1201-27.

Henman, P and Martson, G, (2008), 'The Social Division of Welfare Surveillance' *Journal of Social Policy*, 37, (2), pp187-205.

Hilsen, A., (2006), 'And they Shall be Known by Their Deeds', *Action Research*, 4, (1), pp23-

Hindle, S. (2004), 'Dependency, Shame and Belonging: Badging the Deserving Poor, c. 1550-1750' *Cultural and Social History*, 1, pp6-35

Hoban, M., and Beresford, P., (2001), 'Regenerating Regeneration', *Community Development Journal*, 36, (4), pp312-20.

Hoggett, P., (Ed), (1997a), *Contested Communities: Experiences, Struggles, Policies*, Bristol, Policy Press.

Hoggett, P., (1997b), 'Contested Communities' in P., Hoggett, (Ed), *Contested Communities: Experiences, Struggles, Policies*, Bristol, Policy Press, pp 3-16.

Holmes, M., and Manning, N., (2013), 'Them that Runs the Country don't Know what they're doing': Political Dissatisfaction Amongst Members the White Working Class', *Sociological Review*, 61, pp479-98.

Holloway, S. and Mulherin, S. (2004) "The Effect of Adolescent Neighborhood Poverty on Adult Employment", *Journal of Urban Affairs* 26 (4): pp427-54.

Home Office, (2003), *Drugs and Community Development*, London, TSO.

Howarth, C., (2002), 'So You're from Brixton?': The Struggle for Recognition and Esteem in a Stigmatized Community', *Ethnicities*, 2, (2), pp237-260.

Hunter, T., (2005), *Living in Hell and Other Stories*, London, The National Gallery.

Imrie, R., and Raco, M., (Eds), (2003), *Urban Renaissance? New Labour, Community and Urban Policy*, Bristol, Policy Press.

Imrie, R., and Raco, M., (2003), 'Community and the Changing Nature of Urban Policy', in R., Imrie, and M., Raco, (Eds), *Urban Renaissance? New Labour, Community and Urban Policy*, Bristol, Policy Press, pp3-36.

Irwin, S., (2005), *Reshaping Social Life*, Routledge, London.

Jacobs, J., (1993), *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, New York, Modern Library.

Jenkins, R., (1996), *Social Identity*, London, Routledge.

Jensen, S, Q, and Christensen, D, (2012), 'Territorial Stigmatization and Local Belonging', *City*, 16, (1-2), pp74-92.

Jensen, T., and Tyler, I., (2015), "'Benefits broods': The cultural and political crafting of anti-welfare commonsense', *Critical Social Policy*, 35, (4), pp470-91.

Johnstone, C., and MacLeod, G., (2007), 'New Labour's 'Broken' Neighbourhoods: Liveability, Disorder, and Discipline', in R., Atkinson, and G., Helms, (Eds), *Securing an*

*urban renaissance: Crime, community, and British urban policy*, Bristol, Policy Press, pp75-124.

Johnston, C, and Mooney, G, (2007). 'Problem' people, 'problem' spaces?: New Labour and council estates' in R., Atkinson, and G., Helms, (Eds), *Securing an urban renaissance: Crime, community, and British urban policy*, Bristol, Policy Press, pp125–139.

Johnstone, C. and G. Macleod (2012) “Stretching Urban Renaissance: Privatizing Space, Civilizing Place, Summoning ‘Community’”, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 36, (1), pp1-28.

Jones, A, (2010), ‘Looking Back on New Labour: What got Better?’ *Local Economy*, 25, (5-6), pp357-66.

Jones, H., (2015), *Negotiating Cohesion, Inequality and Change: Uncomfortable Positions in Local Government*, Bristol, Policy Press.

Jones, P., Layard, A., Lorne, C., and Speed, C., (2016), ‘Localism, Neighbourhood Planning and Community Control: the Maplocal Pilot’, O’Brien, D and P., Matthews, (Eds), *After Urban Regeneration: Communities, Policy and Place*, Bristol, Policy Press, pp165-79.

Jorgensen, A. (2010) “The Sense of Belonging in New Urban Zones of Transition”, *Current Sociology* 58, (1), pp3-23.

Jupp, E, (2008), ‘The Feeling of Participation: Everyday Spaces and Urban Change’ *Geoforum*, 39, pp331-43.

Jupp, E., (2013), ‘I feel more at home here than in my own community’: Approaching the emotional geographies of neighbourhood policy’, *Critical Social Policy*, 33, (3), pp532-43.

Katz, M., (Ed), (1993), *The “Underclass” Debate: Views from History*, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton, University Press.

Katz, M., (2013), *The Undeserving Poor: America’s Enduring Confrontation with Poverty*, (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed), Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Kean, H., (2004), *London Stories: Personal Lives, Public Histories*, London, Rivers Oram Ltd.

Keene, D. E. and M. B. Padilla (2010) “Race, Class, and the Stigma of Place: Moving to ‘Opportunity’ in Eastern Iowa”, *Health & Place* 16, (6), pp1216-23.

Kennett, P., (1994), ‘Modes of Regulation and the Urban Poor’, *Urban Studies*, 31, (7), pp1017-31.

Kelaher, M., Warr, D., Feldma, P. & Tacticos, T. (2010) “Living in ‘Birdsville’: Exploring the Impact of Neighbourhood Stigma on Health”, *Health and Place*, 16, (2), pp381-88

Kipfer, S. and Petrunia, J. (2009) “‘Recolonization’ and Public Housing: A Toronto Case Study”, *Studies in Political Economy* 83, pp111-39.

Kohler Riessman, C., (2008), *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences*, London, Sage.

Kouritzin, S., Piquemal, N., and Norman, R., (Eds), (2009), *Qualitative Research: Challenging the Orthodoxies in Standard Academic Discourse(s)*, Routledge, London.

Krase, J. (1977) “Reactions to the Stigmata of Inner City Living”, *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, 7, pp997-1011.

Kvale, S., (2006), ‘Dominance Through Interviews and Dialogues’, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12, (3), pp.480-500.

Larsen, C.S., (2004), *Facilitating Community Involvement: Practical Guidance for Practitioners and Policy Makers*, Home Office, London.

Lavery, B (1997), ‘Goliath: Blackbird Leys, Oxford’ *City*, 2, (8), pp97-103.

Law, J., (2004), *After Method: Mess in Social Science Research*, London, Sage.

Law, A., and Mooney, G., (2006), ‘We’ve Never Had it so Good’: The ‘Problem’ of the Working Class in Devolved Scotland’ *Critical Social Policy*, 26, pp253-42.

Lawler, S., (2002), ‘Mobs and Monsters: Independent Man meets Paulsgrove Woman’, *Feminist Theory*, 3, (1), pp103-13.

Lawler, S., (2004), ‘Rules of Engagement: Habitus, Power and Resistance’, *Sociological Review*, 52, pp110-128

Lawler, S., (2005a), ‘Disgusted Subjects: the Making of Middle-Class Identities’, *Sociological Review*, 53, (3), pp429-46.

Lawler, S., (2005b), ‘Introduction: Class, Culture and Identity’, *Sociology*, 39, (5), pp797-806.

Ledwith, M., (2005), *Community Development: A Critical Approach*, Bristol, Policy Press.

Lee, P., (1994), ‘Housing and Spatial Deprivation: Relocating the Underclass and the New Urban Poor’, *Urban Studies*, 31, (7), pp1191-1209.

Lees, L, (2004), ‘Urban Geography: Discourse Analysis and Urban Research’ *Progress in Human Geography*, 28, (1), pp101-07.

Lefebvre, H., (1991), *The Production of Space*, (Trans. D. Nicholson-Smith), Oxford, Blackwell.

Lemert, C., (2002), *Social Things: An Introduction to the Sociological Life*, Lanham, ML., Rowman and Littlefield.

Levitas, R, (1996), 'The concept of Social Exclusion and the New Durkheimian Hegemony' *Critical Social Policy*, 16, (46), pp5-20

Levitas, R, (1998), *The Inclusive Society? Social Exclusion and New Labour*, London, MacMillan.

Levitas, R, (2000), 'Community, Utopia and New Labour' *Local Economy*, 15, (3), pp188-97.

Levitas, R, Pantazis, C, Fahmy, E, Gordon, D, Lloyd, E and Patsions, D, (2007), *The Multi-Dimensional Analysis of Social Exclusion*, London, DCLG/SEU.

Lincoln, Y and Guba, E., (1985), *Naturalistic Inquiry*, Beverly Hills, CA., Sage

Lincoln, Y., (1995), 'Emerging Criteria for Quality in Qualitative and Interpretive Research' , *Qualitative Inquiry*, 1(3), pp.275-89.

Lincoln, Y., and Guba, E., (2003), 'Paradigms, Controversies, Contradictions and Emerging Confluences', In N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln, (eds), *The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues*, Thousand OAKS, CA, Sage, pp253-91

Link, B., and Phelan, J., (2001), 'Conceptualizing Stigma', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 27, pp363-85.

Livingston, M., and Lee, D., (2014), 'The Glasgow Effect?' – The Result of the Geographical Patterning of Deprived Areas?' *Health and Place*, 29, pp1-9.

Lofland, J., and Lofland, J., (1995), *Analysing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis*, Belmont, CA, Wadsworth Publishing Co.

Loukaitou-Sideris, A and Ehrenfeucht, R, (2009), *Sidewalks: Conflict and Negotiation over Public Space*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press,.

Lund, B, (1999), 'The Poor in a Loomp is Bad': New Labour and Neighbourhood Renewal' *The Political Quarterly*, 70, (3), pp280-84.

Lupton, R., T., Burchardt, J., Hills, K., Stewart, and P., Vizard, (Eds), (2016), *Social Policy in A Cold Climate: Policies and Their Consequences Since the Crisis*, Bristol, Policy Press.

Lupton, R., Obolenskaya, P., and Fitzgerald, A., (2016), 'Spatial Inequalities', in Lupton, R., T., Burchardt, J., Hills, K., Stewart, and P., Vizard, (Eds), *Social Policy in A Cold Climate: Policies and Their Consequences Since the Crisis*, Bristol, Policy Press, pp291-316.

Lynch, K., (1960), *The Image of the City*, Cambridge, MA., MIT Press.

MacDonald, R., Shildrick, T., and Furlong, A., (2014), 'In Search of 'Intergenerational Cultures of Worklessness': Hunting the Yeti and Shooting Zombies', *Critical Social Policy*, 34, (2), pp199-220.

- MacLeavy, J, (2006), 'The Language of Politics and the Politics of Language: Unpacking 'Social Exclusion' in New Labour Policy' *Space and Polity*, 10, 1, pp87-98.
- MacLeod, G., and Ward, K., (2002), 'Spaces of Utopia and Dystopia: Landscaping the Contemporary City', *Geografiska Annaler*, 84 B, (3-4), pp153-70.
- Macnicol, J, (1987), 'In Pursuit of the Underclass' *Journal of Social Policy*, 16, (3), pp293-318.
- Maloutas, T., (2009), 'Urban Outcasts: A Contextualized Outlook on Advanced Marginality', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 33, (3), pp828-34.
- Mann, K, (1986), 'The Making of a Claiming Class - the Neglect of Agency in Analyses of the Welfare State', *Critical Social Policy*, 15, pp62-74
- Mann, K, (1994), 'Watching the Defectives: Observers of the Underclass in the USA, Britain and Australia', *Critical Social Policy*, 14, pp79-99.
- Mann, K., and Roseneil, S., (1994), "Some Mother's Do Have 'Em", Backlash and the Gender Politics of the Underclass Debate', *Journal of Gender Studies*, 3,(3), pp317-31.
- Marshall, G, Roberts, S, and Burgoyne, C., (1996), 'Social Class and Underclass in Britain and the USA', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 47, (1), pp22-44.
- Marson, G, (2008), 'A War on the Poor: Constructing Welfare and Work in the Twenty-First Century' *Critical Discourse Studies*, 5, (4), pp359-70.
- Mason, J., (1996) *Qualitative Researching*, London, Sage.
- Mason, M., ( 2010), 'Sample Size and Saturation in PhD Studies Using Qualitative Interviews', *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 11, 3, Available from <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1428/302>.
- Massey, D.S., (1990), 'American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass' *The American Journal of Sociology*, 96, (2), pp329-57.
- Massey, D., and Denton, N., (1993), *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, Cambridge, MA., Harvard University Press.
- Matthews, P., (2010), 'Mind the Gap? The Persistence of Pathological Discourses in Urban Regeneration Policy', *Housing, Theory and Society*, 27, (3), pp221-40.
- May, J, (1996), 'Globalization and the Politics of Place: Place and Identity in an Inner Neighbourhood' *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 21, (1), pp194-215.
- May, M., (2004), 'The Interplay of Three Established-Outsider Figurations in a Deprived Inner-City Neighbourhood', *Urban Studies*, 41, (11), pp2159-79.

Mayhew, H., (2012), [1862], *London Labour and the London Poor*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

McAreevey, R, 'Community Regeneration: An Elite or a 'Real' Community Space' *International Planning Studies*, 14, (3), pp311-27.

McCulloch, A., (1997), "'You've fucked up the estate and now you're carrying a briefcase!'", in P., Hoggett, (Ed), *Contested Communities: Experiences, Struggles, Policies*, Bristol, Policy Press, pp51-67.

McCulloch, A, (2000), 'Evaluation of a Community Regeneration Project: Case Studies of Cruddas Park Development Trust, Newcastle upon Tyne', *Journal of Social Policy*, 29, (3), pp397-419.

McDowell, L., (2002), 'Masculine Discourses and Dissonances: Strutting 'Lads', Protest Masculinity and Domestic Responsibility', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 20, pp97-119.

McDowell, L., (2003), *Redundant Masculinities?: Employment Change and White Working Class Youth*, Blackwell, Oxford.

McDowell, L., (2007), 'Respect, Deference, Respectability and Place: What is the Problem with/for Working Class Boys?', *Geoforum*, 38, pp276-286.

McDowell, L., (2008), 'Thinking Through Class and Gender in the Context of Working Class Studies', *Antipode*, 40, (1), pp20-4.

McGuigan, J, (1996), *Culture and the Public Sphere*, London, Routledge.

McKenzie, L., (2012), 'A Narrative from the Inside, Studying St. Anns in Nottingham: Belonging, Continuity and Change', *Sociological Review*, 60, pp457-75.

McKenzie, L., (2015), *Getting By: Estates, Class and Culture in Austerity Britain*, Bristol, Policy Press.

McLanahan, S and Garfinkel, I, (1989), 'Single Mothers, the Underclass and Social Policy' *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 501, pp92-104.

McLaren, L., Perry, R., Carrathers, L., and Hawe, P., (2005), 'Introducing a Means of Quantifying Community Reputation: the Print Media as a Data Source', *Health and Place*, 11, pp187-94.

Macleod, G., and Ward, K., (2002), 'Spaces of Utopia and Dystopia: Landscaping the Contemporary City', *Geografiska Annaler, Series B, Human Geography*, 84, (3-4), pp153-70.

Massey, D., (2005), *For Space*, London, Sage.

Mead, L. M., (1989), 'The Logic of Workfare: The Underclass and Work Policy' *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 501, pp156-69.



Mee, K., (2007), “‘I Ain’t Been to Heaven Yet? Living Here, This is Heaven to Me’: Public Housing and the Making of Home in Inner Newcastle’, *Housing, Theory and Society*, 24, (3), pp207-28.

Mellor, D., (2007), *No Such Thing as Society: Photography in Britain 1967-87*, London, Hayward Gallery Publishing.

Mendieta, E., (2007), ‘Penalized Spaces: The ghetto as prison and the prison as ghetto’, *City*, 11, (3), pp384-90.

Merrifield, A., (2000), ‘The Dialectics of Dystopia: Disorder and Zero Tolerance on the City’, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 24, (2), pp473-89.

Merry, M., Manley, D., and Harris, R., (2016), ‘Community, Virtue and the White British Poor’, *Dialogues in Human Geography*, 6, (1), pp50-68.

Millie, A., (Ed), (2009), *Securing Respect: Behavioural Expectations and Anti-Social Behaviour in the UK*, Bristol, Policy Press.

Misra, J, Moller, S, and Karides, M, (2003), ‘Envisioning Dependency: Changing Media Depictions of Welfare in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century’ *Social Problems*, 50, (4), pp482-505.

Mogey, J., (1956), *Family and Neighbourhood: Two Studies in Oxford*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Mood, C. (2010) “Neighborhood Social Influence and Welfare Receipt in Sweden: A Panel Data Analysis”, *Social Forces*, 88, (3), pp1331-56.

Mooney, G., and Neal, S., (2010), ‘Welfare Worries’: Mapping Directions of Welfare Futures in the Contemporary UK’, *Research, Policy and Planning*, 27, (3), pp141-50.

Morgan, D, (2005), ‘Revisiting “communities in Britain”’, *The Sociological Review*, 53, (4), pp641-57.

Morris, L., (2016), ‘The moral economy of austerity: analysing UK welfare reform’, *The British Journal of Sociology*, 67, (1), pp97-117.

Morris, M, (1989), ‘From the Culture of Poverty to the Underclass: An Analysis of a Shift in Public Language’ *American Sociologist*, 20, (2), pp123-35.

Morris, S, (1996), *Policing Problem Housing Estates*, Crime Detection and Prevention Series, 74, London, Home Office.

Morris, R.N., and Mogey, J., (2001) [1965], *The Sociology of Housing: Studies at Berinsfield*, Routledge, London.

Morrison, A., (1997), [1894], *Tales of Mean Streets*, Chicago, Academy Chicago Publishers.

Morrison, A., (2009), [1896], *A Child of the Jago*, Chicago, Academy Chicago Publishers.

Murie, A., (1997), 'Linking Housing Changes to Crime', *Social Policy and Administration*, 31, (5), pp22-36

Murphy, A.K. (2012) "Litterers": How Objects of Physical Disorder are Used to Construct Subjects of Social Disorder in a Suburb", *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 642, pp210-27.

Musterd, S., (2008), 'Residents' Views on Social Mix: Social Mix, Social Networks and Stigmatisation in Post-War Housing Estates in Europe', *Urban Studies*, 45, (4), pp897-915.

National Audit Office, (2010), *Regenerating the English Regions: Regional Development Agencies' Support to Physical Regeneration Projects*, NAO, London.

National Audit Office, (2010), *Tackling Inequalities in Life Expectancy in Areas with the Worst Health and Deprivation*, NAO, London.

Nespor, J., (2000), 'Anonymity and Place in Qualitative Inquiry', *Qualitative Inquiry*, 6, pp546-68.

Newby, H., (2008), 'Reflections on Colin Bell and the Past and Future of Community Studies', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 11, (2), pp93-96.

Newman, O., (1972) *Defensible Space – Crime Prevention Through Urban Design*, New York, MacMillan.

Noble, M., Smith, G., Avenell, D., Smith, T., and Shartland, E., (1994), *Changing Patterns of Income and Wealth in Oxford and Oldham*, York, Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Nobles, M., (2010), "'Here a Ghetto, There a Ghetto": The Value and Peril of Comparative Study', *Urban Geography*, 31, (2), pp158-61

North, P., (2011), 'Commentary: Geographies and Utopias of Cameron's Big Society', *Social and Cultural Geography*, 12, (8), pp817-27.

Norris, M., (Ed), (2014), *Social Housing, Disadvantage and Neighbourhood Liveability: Ten Years of Change in Social Housing Neighbourhoods*, Routledge, London.

O'Brien, D., and P., Matthews, (Eds), (2016), *After Urban Regeneration: Communities, Policy and Place*, Bristol, Policy Press.

O'Brien, D., and Matthews, P., (2016), 'Conclusion', in O'Brien, D and P., Matthews, (Eds), *After Urban Regeneration: Communities, Policy and Place*, Bristol, Policy Press, pp199-204.

O'Connell Davidson, J., and Layder, D., (1994), *Methods, Sex and Madness*, London, Routledge.

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2005), *Sustainable Communities: People, Places and Prosperity: A Five Year Plan from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister*, London, ODPM.

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, (2005), *Making it Happen in Neighbourhoods: The National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal – Four Years On*, London, ODPM.

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, (2006), *Social Exclusion*, London, ODPM.

O’Gorman, A., (2014), ‘Social (Dis)order and Community Safety’, in M., Norris, (Ed), *Social Housing, Disadvantage and Neighbourhood Liveability: Ten Years of Change in Social Housing Neighbourhoods*, Routledge, London, pp173-191.

Orford, S., and Leigh, C., (2014), ‘The Relationship between Self-reported Definitions of Urban Neighbourhood and Respondent Characteristics: A Study of Cardiff, UK’, *Urban Studies*, 51, (9), pp1891-1908.

Oxford City Council, (2015), *Oxford Profile 2015: A Summary of Key Facts about Oxford’s Population, Economy and Housing*, Oxford, Oxford City Council.

Pahl, R, (2005), ‘Are all Communities - Communities in the Mind?’ *Sociological Review*, 53, (4), pp621-40.

Palmer, C., Ziersch, A., Arthurson, K. & Baum, F. (2004) “Challenging the Stigma of Public Housing: Preliminary Findings from a Qualitative Study in South Australia,” *Urban Policy and Research* 22, (4), pp411-26.

Park, R., and Burgess, E., (1967), [1925], *The City: Suggestions for Investigation of Human Behavior in The Urban Environment*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

Pantazis, C., (2016), ‘Policies and discourses of poverty during a time of recession and austerity’, *Critical Social Policy*, 36, (1), pp3-20.

Pattilo, M., (2009), ‘Revisiting Loic Wacquant’s *Urban Outcasts*’, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 33, (3), pp858-64.

Pearce, J. (2012) “The ‘Blemish of Place’: Stigma, Geography and Health Inequalities: A Commentary on Tabuchi, Fukuhara and Iso”, *Social Science and Medicine*, 75, pp1921-24.

Pemberton, S., Fahmy, E., Sutton, E., and Bell, K., (2016), ‘Navigating the stigmatised identities of poverty in austere times: Resisting and responding to narratives of personal failure’, *Critical Social Policy*, 36, (1), pp21-37.

Pereira, V., (2007), ‘Class, ethnicity, Leviathan and place: Implications of *Urban Outcasts* for the comparative sociology of contemporary Western cities’, *City*, 11, (3), pp405-12.

Permentier, M. G., van Ham, M. and Bolt, G. (2007) “Behavioural Responses to Neighbourhood Reputations”, *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*, 22, pp199-213.

Permentier, M. G., van Ham, M. and Bolt, G. (2008) "Same Neighbourhood ... Different Views? A Confrontation of Internal and External Neighbourhood Reputations", *Housing Studies* 23, (6), pp833-855.

Permentier, M. G., van Ham, M. and Bolt, G. (2009) "Neighbourhood Reputation and the Intention to Leave the Neighbourhood", *Environment and Planning A*, 41, pp2162-80.

Permentier, M., G. Bolt, and M. van Ham (2011) "Determinants of Neighbourhood Satisfaction and Perception of Neighbourhood Reputation", *Urban Studies* 48, (5), pp977-996.

Piachaud, D., (2001), 'Child Poverty, Opportunities and Quality of Life', *The Political Quarterly*, 72, pp446-53.

Pile, S., Brook, C., and Mooney, G., (1999), *Unruly Cities: Order/Disorder*, Milton Keynes, OUP.

Plummer, K., (1983), *Documents of Life: An Introduction to the Problems and Literature of Humanistic Method*, London, George, Allen and Unwin.

Popay, J and Williams, G.H., (eds), (1994), *Researching the People's Health*. London, Routledge

Potter, J. and Mulkay, M., (1985), 'Scientists' Interview Talk: Interviews as a Technique for Revealing participants' Interpretative Practices' in In M., Brenner, J., Brown, and D., Canter, (eds) *The Research Interview Uses and Approaches*, London, Academic Press pp

Power, A., (1987), *Property Before People: The Management of Twentieth-Century Council Housing*, London, Allen and Unwin.

Power, A., (1997), *Estates on the Edge*, London, MacMillan,

Power, A., (1999), 'High-Rise Estates in Europe: Is Rescue Possible?' *Journal of European Social Policy*, 9, (2), 139-63.

Power, A., and Tunstall R., (1997), *Riots and violent disturbances in thirteen areas of Britain*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York.

Preissle, J, (2006), 'Envisioning qualitative inquiry: a view across four decades' *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 19, (6), pp685-95

Prichard, M, (1977), 'Which Scheme? Oxford City Council's Debate on Comprehensive Reorganisation, 1964-67', *Oxford Review of Education*, 3, (3), pp257-68.

Public Health England, (2015), *Marmot Indicators for Local Authorities - Oxfordshire*, available at [https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile-group/marmot/profile/marmot-indicators/area-search-results/E12000008?search\\_type=list-child-areas&place\\_name=South%20East](https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile-group/marmot/profile/marmot-indicators/area-search-results/E12000008?search_type=list-child-areas&place_name=South%20East)

Purdy, S. (2003) "'Ripped off" by the System: Housing Policy, Poverty, and

Territorial Stigmatization in Regent Park Housing Project, 1951-1991", *Labour/LaTravail*, 52, pp45-108.

Purvis, T and Hunt, A, (1993), 'Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology...' *British Journal of Sociology*, 44, pp473-99.

Reay, D and Lucey, H, (2000), "'I don't really like it here but I don't want to be anywhere else": Children and Inner City Council Estates', *Antipode*, 32, (4), pp410-28.

Reijnders, S (2009), 'Watching the Detectives: Inside the Guilty Landscapes of Inspector Morse, Baantjer and Wallander', *European Journal of Communication*, 24, pp165-81.

Reynolds, F, (1986), *The Problem Housing Estate: An Account of Omega and Its People*, Aldershot, Gower Publishing.

Rex, J. (1982) The 1981 riots in Britain, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 6, (1), pp99-113.

Rhodes, J. (2012) "Stigmatization, Space, and Boundaries in De-industrial Burnley", *Ethnic & Racial Studies* 35, (4), pp684-703.

Richardson, T and Jensen, O, (2003), 'Linking Discourse and Space: Towards a Cultural Sociology of Space in Analysing Spatial Policy Discourses' *Urban Studies*, 40, pp7-22.

Roberts, R., (1990), [1971], *The Classic Slum: Salford Life in the First Quarter of the Century*, London, Penguin.

Robertson, D, Smyth, J and McIntosh, I, (2008), *Neighbourhood Identity: People, Time and Place*, York, JRF.

Rogaly, B and Taylor, B, (2011), *Moving Histories of Class and Community: Identity Place and Belonging in Contemporary England*, Basingstoke, Palgrave.

Rose, N, (1996), 'The Death of the Social? Re-figuring the Territory of Government' *Economy and Society*, 25, (3), pp327-56

Runciman, W.G. (1990), 'How Many Classes are there in Contemporary British Society?' *Sociology*, 24, (3), pp377-96

Ruggiero, V., (2000), *Crime and Markets: Essays in Anti-Criminology*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Ruggiero, V., (2007), 'Marginal economies and collective action', *City*, 11, (3), pp391-98.

Ruggiero, V., (2010), 'Social Disorder and the Criminalization of Indolence', *City*, 14, (1-2), pp164-69.

Sampson, A, (2007), 'Developing Robust Approaches to Evaluating Social Programmes', *Evaluation*, 13, pp477-93.

- Sampson, R. J. (2009) "Disparity and Diversity in the Contemporary City: Social (Dis)order Revisited", *The British Journal of Sociology*, 60, (1), pp1-31.
- Sampson, R. J. and S. W. Raudenbush (2004) "Seeing Disorder: Neighborhood Stigma and the Social Construction of 'Broken Windows'", *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 67, (4), pp319-42.
- Sacks, H., (1992), *Lectures on Conversation*, (Vol Two), Massachusetts, Blackwell Publishers.
- Saldana, J., (2009), *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, London, Sage.
- Sanchez-Jankowski, M, (2008), *Cracks in the Pavement: Social Change and Resilience in Poor Neighbourhoods*, University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Savage, M, (2008), 'Histories, Belongings, Communities', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 11, (2), pp151-62.
- Savage, M., (2013), 'The 'Social Life of Methods': A Critical Introduction', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 30, (4), pp3-21.
- Scarman, L.G., (1981), *The Brixton Disorders, April 10-12, 1981: Inquiry Report*, Cmnd 8247, HMSO, London.
- Schafran, A, (2013), 'Discourse and Dystopia, American Style,' *City*, 17, (2), pp130-48.
- Schmitter Heisler, B, (1991), 'A Comparative Perspective on the Underclass: Questions of Urban Poverty, Race and Citizenship' *Theory and Society*, 20, 4, pp455-83
- Schoon, N., (2001), *The Chosen City*, London, Spon Press.
- Scott, J., (1985), *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, New Haven, Conn., Yale University Press.
- Scott, J., (1990), *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, New Haven, Conn., Yale University Press.
- Seabrook, J, (1996), 'An English Exile' in *What Happened to Us? Britain's Valedictory Realism*, *Granta*, 56, Winter, London, Granta, pp173-89.
- Seale, C., (1999), *The Quality of Qualitative Research*, London, Sage.
- Sernhede, O. (2011) "School, Youth Culture and Territorial Stigmatization in Swedish Metropolitan Districts", *Young*, 19, (2), pp159-80.
- Shaw, C., and McKay, H., (1942), *Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas*, Chicago, Chicago University Press.
- Shildrick, T., and MacDonald, R., (2013), "Poverty Talk: How People Experiencing Poverty Deny their Poverty and Why They Blame 'the Poor'", *Sociological Review*, 61, pp285-303.

Shildrick, T., MacDonald, R., Furlong, A., Roden, J., and Crow, R., (2012), *Are 'Cultures of Worklessness' Passed Down the Generations*, York, Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Silk, J., (1999), 'The Dynamic of Community, Place and Identity', *Environment and Planning A*, 31, pp5-17.

Silverman, D., (1997), 'Toward an Aesthetics of Research' in Silverman, D., (Ed), *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice*, London, Sage, pp239-253

Silverman, D., (Ed), (1997), *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice*, London, Sage.

Silverman, (2001), *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice*, London, Sage.

Skeggs, (1997), *Formations of Class and Gender*, London, Sage.

Skeggs, B., (2004), *Class, Self, Culture*, Routledge, London.

Skeggs, B., (2011), 'Imagining Personhood Differently: Person Value and Autonomist Working-Class Value Practices', *Sociological Review*, 59, (3), pp496-513.

Skeggs, B., and Loveday, V., (2012), 'Struggles for Value: Value Practices, Injustice, Judgment, Affect and the Idea of Class', *British Journal of Sociology*, 63, (3), pp472-490.

SKeggs, B and Wood, H., (2012), *Reacting to Reality Television: Performance, Audience and Value*, London, Routledge.

Skifter Andersen, H., (2002), 'Excluded Places: the Interaction Between Segregation, Urban Decay and Deprived Neighbourhoods', *Housing, Theory and Society*, 19, pp153-69.

Slater, T., (2010), 'Ghetto Blasting: On Loic Wacquant's *Urban Outcasts*', *Urban Geography*, 31, (2), pp162-68.

Slater, T., (2012), 'The Myth of "Broken Britain": Welfare Reform and the Production of Ignorance', *Antipode*, 46, (4), pp948-69.

Slater, T. and Anderson, N. (2012) "The Reputational Ghetto: Territorial Stigmatisation in St. Paul's, Bristol", *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 37, (4), pp530-46.

Small, M., (2007), 'Is there such a thing as 'the ghetto'? The perils of assuming that the South Side of Chicago represents poor black neighbourhoods', *City*, 11, (3), pp413-21.

Smith, D., (2005), *On the Margins of Inclusion: Changing Labour Markets and Social Exclusion in London*, Bristol, Policy Press.

Smith, I., Lepine, E. and Taylor, M., (Eds), (2007), *Disadvantaged by Where You Live? Neighbourhood Governance in Contemporary Urban Policy*, Bristol, Policy Press.

Smith, R. J. (2011) "Goffman's Interaction Order at the Margins: Stigma, Role, and Normalization in the Outreach Encounter", *Symbolic Interaction* 34, (3), 357-76.

Social Exclusion Unit (1998), *Bringing Britain Together: A National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal*, London, TSO.

Social Exclusion Unit, (2000), *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal: A Framework for Consultation*, London, Cabinet Office.

Social Exclusion Unit (2001), *A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal*, London, Cabinet Office.

Social Exclusion Unit, (2003), *Tackling Social Exclusion: Achievements, Lessons Learned and the Way Forward*, London, Social Exclusion Unit.

Social Exclusion Unit, (2004), *Breaking the Cycle: Taking Stock of Progress and Priorities for the Future*, London, Social Exclusion Unit.

Sommers, J. (1998) "Men at the Margin: Masculinity and Space in Downtown Vancouver, 1950-1986", *Urban Geography*, 19, (4), pp287-310.

Sparks, R, Girling E, and Loader, I, (2001), 'Fear and Everyday Urban Lives', *Urban Studies*, 38, (5-6), pp885-98.

Speed, C., Wurie-Khan, A., and Phillips, M., (2016), 'Contemporary Governance Discourse and Digital Media: Convergences, Prospects and Problems for the 'Big Society' Agenda', in O'Brien, D and P., Matthews, (Eds), *After Urban Regeneration: Communities, Policy and Place*, Bristol, Policy Press, pp147-62.

Springs, N., and Allen, C., (2005), 'The Communities We Are Regaining But Need to Lose' *Community, Work and Family*, 8, (4), pp389-411.

Stacey, M. (1960), *Tradition and Change: A Study of Banbury*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Stacey, M. (1969), 'The Myth of Community Studies', *British Journal of Sociology*, 20, (2), pp134-47.

Starkey, P, (2000), 'The Feckless Mother: Women, Poverty and Social Workers in Wartime and Post-War England' *Women's History Review*, 9, (3), pp539-57.

Stewart, K., (2009), 'Labour's Record on Inequality and the New Opportunities White Paper', *The Political Quarterly*, 80, (3), pp427-33.

Stone, D., (1989), 'Causal Stories and the Formation of Policy Agendas', *Political Science Quarterly*, 104, (2), pp281-300

Stuber, J., and Meyer, I., (2008), 'Stigma, Prejudice, Discrimination and Health' *Social*



*Science and Medicine*, 67, pp351-57.

Suttles, G, (1972), *The Social Construction of Communities*, Chicago University Press, Chicago.

Swaminathan, R and Mulvihill, T.M. (2017) *Critical Approaches to Questions in Qualitative Research*, Routledge, New York

Takahashi, L. M., J. McElroy and S. Rowe (2002) “The Sociospatial Stigmatization of Homeless Women with Children”, *Urban Geography*, 23, (4), pp301-322.

Taylor, I., Evans, K., and Fraser, P., (1996), *A Tale of Two Cities: Global Change, Local Feeling and Everyday Life in the North of England*, Routledge, London.

Taylor, M, (2009), *Transforming Disadvantaged Places: Effective Strategies for Places and People*, JRF, York.

Thomson, P., (2006), ‘Miners, diggers, ferals and show-men: school-community projects that affirm and unsettle identities and place?’, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 27, (1), pp81-96.

Tiesdell, S., and Allmendinger, P., (2001), ‘Neighbourhood Regeneration and New Labour’s Third Way’, *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 19, pp903-26.

Tissot, S., (2007), ‘The role of race and class in urban marginality: Discussing Loic Wacquant’s comparison between the USA and France’, *City*, 11, (3), pp364-9.

Todd, S., (2008), ‘Affluence, Class and Crown Street: Reinvestigating the Post-War Working Class’, *Contemporary British History*, 22, (4), pp501-18.

Tracy, S., (2010), Qualitative Quality: Eight “Big-Tent” Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research’, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 16, (10), pp837-51

Tyler, I, (2013), *Revolting Subjects: Social Abjection and Resistance in Neoliberal Britain*, Zed Books, London.

Tunstall, R., Green, A., Lupton, R., Watmough, S., and Bates, K., (2014), ‘Does Poor Neighbourhood Reputation Create a Neighbourhood Effect on Employment? The Results of a Field Experiment in the UK’, *Urban Studies*, 51, (4), pp763-80.

Uitermark, J., J. W. Duyvendak and R. Kleinhans (2007) “Gentrification as a Governmental Strategy: Social Control and Social Cohesion in Hoogvliet, Rotterdam”, *Environment and Planning A*, 39, (1), pp125-141.

Urry, J., (2003), *Global Complexity*, Cambridge, Polity Press.

Valentine, K., and Fraser, S., (2008), ‘Trauma, Damage and Pleasure: Rethinking Problematic Drug Use’, *The International Journal of Drug Policy*, 19,(5), pp410-6

- van Eijk, G. (2012) "Good Neighbours in Bad Neighbourhoods: Narratives of Dissociation and Practices of Neighbouring in a 'Problem' Place" *Urban Studies* 49
- Vincent, C, Ball, S and Braun, A, (2008), 'It's Like Saying 'Coloured': Understanding and Analysing the Urban Working Classes', *Sociological Review*, 56, (1), pp61-77
- Vincent, C, Ball, S and Braun, A, (2010), 'Between the Estate and the State: Struggling to be a 'Good' Mother' *British Journal of Sociology*, 31, (2), pp123-38.
- Wacquant, L. (1993) "Urban outcasts: Stigma and Division in the Black American Ghetto and the French Urban Periphery" *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 17, (3), pp366-83.
- Wacquant, L., (1996), 'The Rise of Advanced Marginality: Notes on Its Nature and Implications', *Acta Sociologica*, 39, (2), pp121-39.
- Wacquant, L., (2007), 'Territorial Stigmatization in the Age of Advanced Marginality', *Thesis Eleven*, 91, pp66-77.
- Wacquant, L., (2008), 'Relocating Gentrification: The Working Class, Science and the State in Recent Urban Research', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 32, (1), pp198-205.
- Wacquant, L., (2008), 'Ghettos and Anti-Ghettos: An Anatomy of the New Urban Poverty', *Thesis Eleven*, 94, pp113-18.
- Wacquant, L, (2008), *Urban Outcasts: A Comparative Sociology of Advanced Marginality*, Cambridge, Polity
- Wacqaunt, L, (2009), *Prisons of Poverty*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.
- Wacquant, L, (2009), *Punishing the Poor: The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity*, Durham, Duke University Press.
- Wacquant, L. (2010) "Urban Desolation and Symbolic Denigration in the Hyperghetto", *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 73, (3), pp215-19.
- Wacquant, L., (2016), 'Revisiting territories of relegation: Class, ethnicity and state in the making of advanced marginality', *Urban Studies*, 53, (6), 1077-1088.
- Wallace, A, (2007), 'We Have had Nothing for so Long that We Don't Know What to Ask For': New Deal for Communities and the Regeneration of Socially Excluded Terrain', *Social Policy and Society*, 6, (1), pp1-12.
- Ward, S, Stuart, O and Swyngedouw, E, (1993), 'Cowley in the Oxford Economy' in T. Hayter and D. Harvey (Eds), *The Factory and The City: The Story of the Cowley Automobile Workers in Oxford*, London, Mansell Publishing, pp67-92.
- Warr, D. J. (2005) "There Goes the Neighbourhood: The Malign Effects of Stigma", *Social City*, 19, pp1-11.

- Warr, D. J., (2005), 'Social Networks in a 'Discredited' Neighbourhood', *Journal of Sociology*, 41, (3), pp285-308.
- Wassenberg, F. (2004), 'Large Social Housing Estates: From Stigma to Demolition?' *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*, 19, pp223-32.
- Wassenberg, F. (2004) "Renewing Stigmatised Estates in the Netherlands: A Framework for Image Renewal Strategies", *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*, 19, pp271-292.
- Watt, P. (2000), 'Discourses of Social Exclusion: An Analysis of Bringing Britain Together: A National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal' *Housing, Theory and Society*, 17, (1), pp14-26.
- Watt, P., (2006), 'Respectability, Roughness and 'Race': Neighbourhood Place Images and the Making of Working-Class Social Distinctions in London', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 30, (4), pp776-97.
- Watt, P. (2008), 'Underclass' and 'Ordinary People Discourses: Representing/Re-presenting Council Tenants in a Housing Campaign', *Critical Discourse Studies*, 5, (4), pp345-57.
- Watt, P., (2013), 'It's not for us', *City*, 17, (1), pp99-118.
- Watt, P and Jacobs, K. (2000), 'Discourses of Social Exclusion: An Analysis of Bringing Britain Together: A National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal', *Housing, Theory and Society*, 17, pp14-26
- Welshman, J. (1999), 'The Social History of Social Work: The Issue of the 'Problem Family'', 1940-70' *British Journal of Social Work*, 29, pp457-76.
- Welshman, J. (2005), 'Ideology, Social Science, and Public Policy: The Debate over Transmitted Deprivation' *Twentieth Century British History*, 16, (3), pp306-41.
- Welshman, J. (2006a), 'From the Cycle of Deprivation to Social Exclusion: Five Continuities', *The Political Quarterly*, 77, (4), pp475-84
- Welshman, J. (2006b), 'The Concept of the Unemployable' *Economic History Review*, LIX, (3), pp578-606.
- Westergaard, J. (1992), 'About and Beyond the Underclass' *Sociology*, 26, (4), pp575-87
- Western, J., (2010), 'Just How Different? Loic Wacquant's Chicago-Paris Comparisons' *Urban Geography*, 31, (2), pp175-78
- White, E., (2007), '(Un)ghetto fabulous: Thoughts on Loic Wacquant's *Urban Outcasts*', *City*, 11, (3), pp370-77
- Whyte, W. (1993), *Street Corner Society: The Social Structure of an Italian Slum*, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed., University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Wiggan, J., (2012), 'Telling Stories of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Welfare: The UK Coalition Government

and the Neo-Liberal Discourse of Worklessness and Dependency', *Critical Social Policy*, 32, (3), pp 383-405.

Wilks-Heeg, S., (2016), 'Urban Policy and Communities', O'Brien, D and P., Matthews, (Eds), *After Urban Regeneration: Communities, Policy and Place*, Bristol, Policy Press, pp9-25

Williams, R, (1975), *The Country and the City*, St. Albans, Paladin.

Wilson, W.J., (1989), 'The Underclass: Issues, Perspectives, and Public Policy' *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 501, pp182-92.

Wilson, W.J., (2012), *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy*, (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed), University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Winlow, S., and Hall, S., (2013), *Rethinking Social Inclusion: The End of the Social?*, London, Sage.

Wirth, L, (1938), 'Urbanism as a Way of Life', *The American Journal of Sociology*, 44, (1), pp1-24.

Wirth, L, (1942), 'Urban Communities', *The American Journal of Sociology*, 47, (6), pp829-40.

Wofinden, R., (1946), 'Problem Families', *The Eugenics Review*, 38, (3), pp127-32.

Wray, M., (2006), *Not Quite White: White Trash and the Boundaries of Whiteness*, Durham, Duke University Press.

Young, J., (1999), *The Exclusive Society: Social Exclusion, Crime and Difference in Late Modernity*, London, Sage.

Young, M and Wilmott, P, (2007) [1957], *Family and Kinship in East London*, London, Penguin.

Zukin, S, (2010), *Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places*, Oxford University Press, New York.

## **Appendix One: Participant Information Sheet.**

### **INFORMATION SHEET**

My name is Richard Huggins and I am a postgraduate researcher from the University of Warwick and I am carrying out some research about community. **I'm interested in resident's views and experiences of their community and what it is like to live where they do.**

I would like to ask you to take part in this research. Before you decide if you want to take part or not, I want to tell you why the research is being done, and what you can expect if you do take part. I am asking you to take part in this study because you may be a resident of one of the areas I am researching and, as such, may have views and experiences relating to the your community, what you see as the strengths and weaknesses of the area you live in are and how you think the area is viewed by non-residents.

If you agree to participate I would like you to take part in a semi-structured interview which would last about an hour and would be conducted in a location of your choice in the area in which you live – this is most likely to be a public/community building such as, for example, the Community Centre or the Barn or somewhere similar. I would like to record these interviews and then have them transcribed. These transcriptions will be done by professional and highly experienced transcribers who will ensure that the transcript is anonymised and that people can not be identified from the transcript. I will then send you a copy of the transcript (that you can keep) and will ask you if you wish to change anything and/or discuss the content of the transcript in a meeting or over the telephone which ever best suits you. The audio recording of the interview will be erased once the transcription is completed. Once you have agreed the transcript and its content (if you do) no one other than me and you will be allowed to see this transcript.

I will analyse the transcripts and will use the information and analysis produced to write my PhD. I will also write research papers, based on the data that will be submitted for publication in academic journals.

No one will be able to identify you from your contributions – all interviews will be anonymised and, as stated above, you will be able to read the transcript of your interview and change or remove anything that you are not comfortable with.

People who agree to participate in this research will be sent a summary of the findings at the end of the project and will be able to discuss these with the researcher if they would like to. Participation in this research is entirely voluntary and anyone who does take part is free to withdraw the study at anytime – if you wish to do this please contact me and I will return the transcript of your interview to you.

If you have any further questions or would like to discuss the project further before deciding whether or not you would like to participate please contact me on 07540 108744 or email [R.T.Huggins@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:R.T.Huggins@warwick.ac.uk)

**Richard Huggins,**

Department of Sociology, University of Warwick, Coventry, CV4 7AL

## **Appendix Two - Topic guide**

### **Section One: overview**

**How would you describe this area?**

**What do you see as the main strengths of the area?**

can you think of any examples of this?303

**What is it like to live around here?**

**What do you think is the best thing about your area?**

Why do you think that?

**What do you think is the worst thing about your area?**

Why do you think that?

**What does your area (neighbourhood/community) offer in terms of:**

- Public space
- Public amenities
- Focal points
- Contact with others – shops, pubs, libraries etc
- Play/Leisure

**Would you describe your area as well-maintained/cared for?**

**Do you feel connected to other parts of Oxford living here?**

- Which bits?
- Or why not?

**Are there signs of disorganisation? Disorder?**

**What do you think people who don't live here think of this area?**

How do they see those who live there?

**How does the area tend to get reported in the local media?**

**Are there any signs of change?**

If so, in what direction (good/bad).

## **Section Two: Living on the Estate**

**What do you think the main difficulties are that people from this area face?**

**Can you think of any examples of people you know or know of who have experienced that?**

**How would you describe the job opportunities available to people from the estate?**

**How good is the public transport links in and out of the estate?**

**Where do people go for work?**

**Where for they shop?**

**Go for leisure activities (and what kind?).**

**Where do people go for treats for**

- themselves?
- their kids
- other members of their family?

## **Section Three: Community Issues**

**Would you describe it as like one community here?**

- If yes, why?
- If no, why not?
- Is it one or many communities?

**Do you think certain groups (or individuals) are excluded?**

If so, how and by whom?

**Do you think there is a lot of people moving in and out of the community or has it been stable over the years?**

**How are newcomers treated?**

**Do people know each other?**

**Do they help each other out?**

**Do people work together over particular issues?**

If yes, please give examples

**Do you know of any formal organisations on the estate?**

**Do you know of any voluntary organisations on the estate?**

**Do you know of any informal organisations on the estate?**

**Do you think there any community 'leaders' ?**

- Why do you think they are leaders?
- what sort of thing do they do in particular that makes them leaders?
- Do you think most people think they are leaders?
- if yes, why?
- if no, why not?

**What about informal networks?**

- To organise childcare?
- Get things done?
- Support/control children and young people?

#### **Section Four: thinking about change**

**Who gets things done?**

**Can residents do anything about their area?**

**What would you like to change?**

**Are things getting better or worse?**

**Are there any bad things about the area?**

- Fights?
- Conflicts?
- Crime?
- Gangs?
- Drug issues?
- Anti-social behaviour?

**Are some forms of crime acceptable?**

**Is the area safe for:**

- Children?
- Teenagers?
- Older people?
- Women?



- Men?
- Others?

**Do children play outside?**

**Is it safe to go out at night?**

**Is there easy access to:**

- Drugs?
- Alcohol?
- Weapons?

**Are there signs of physical disorder/disorganisation?**

**Can you identify what needs to be done?**

**What changes would you like to see?**

**What would make your area of the city ‘better’ for you and your neighbours to live in?**

**Who do you think should make this happens?**

**Can you think of what the barriers might be to making this actually happen?**

**Have you had any experience of ‘regeneration’ processes before?**

**What experiences have you had of direct inter-action with service providers and agencies in your neighbourhood?**

If Yes which ones?

What was there experience?

**Have you any views of the City Council’s approach to regeneration and community development in the neighbourhood?**

**Do you think that people living in your community are effectively involved or encouraged to be involved in discussions of the neighbourhoods needs and future?**

**Do you think the community’s views are taken seriously by local councillors, the City Council or by other organisations?**

**Are there any other things you would like to mention or think I should have asked about?**

